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Lisa and the King

ELIOT, GEORGIE (PSEUD.) I. E. MARIAN EVANS, AFTER-  
WARDS CROSS

THE WORKS OF  
**GEORGE ELIOT**

POEMS

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## GEORGE ELIOT AS A POET

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(From the *Contemporary Review*, vol. viii, p. 397)

**A**S if a strong, delightful water that we knew only as a river appeared in the character of a fountain; as if one whom we had wondered at as a good walker or inexhaustible pedestrian, began to dance; as if Mr. Bright, in the middle of a public meeting, were to oblige the company with a song, — no, no, not like that exactly, but like something quite new, — is the appearance of George Eliot in the character of a poet. “The Spanish Gypsy,” a poem in five books, originally written, as a prefatory note informs us, in the winter of 1864–65, and, after a visit to Spain in 1867, re-written and amplified, is before us. It is a great volume of three hundred and fifty octavo pages; and the first thing which strikes the reader is, that it is a good deal longer than he expected it would be. This is bad, to begin with. What right has anybody to make a poem longer than one expected? The next thing that strikes one is, — at all events, the next thing that struck me was, as I very hastily turned over the book, — that the fine *largo* of the author’s manner, continued through so many pages, was a very little burdensome in its effect. That may come of the specific levity of my taste; but it is as well to be quite frank.

Dr. Holmes, of Boston, says — I fear I am repeating myself, as he did with his illustration of the alighting huma — that a poem is like a violin

## 2 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

in the respect that it needs to be kept and used a good deal before you know what music there is in it. If that is so, what may here be said of George Eliot's poem will have but little value; for the book has only been in my hand a few days, at a time when my preoccupation is great, and reading is painful to me. But, in the first place, I do really think my hasty impressions are correct in this case; and, in the second, I shall find some way of returning to the book, if after very often-repeated readings (according to my habit) I alter any of my opinions.

In the *Argosy* I once gave reasons for looking forward with deep interest to anything George Eliot might do in the shape of poetry, and also hinted the direction in which her risk of greater or less failure appeared to me to lie. "You can never reckon up these high-strung natures, ever ready to be re-impregnated," or tell what surprises they may have in store for you. It had often struck me that there was a vein of poetic *expression* in the writing of George Eliot, of which a hundred instances might have been given. But the question of questions remained: Had she such a power, not to say necessity, of spontaneous expression in verse, that when we saw her poetry we should inevitably say, as Milton said of himself, that the expression in verse was the right-hand speech, that in prose the left-hand speech? How fine are the shades or gradations of quality in this respect, can be little understood by those who have not, by instinct or otherwise, fed, so to speak, on verse. For example, we all know that Wordsworth often wrote, in the printed form of verse, the most utterly detestable prose. Yet he could and did produce most exquisite verse. Again, a living

poet of the school of Wordsworth, Mr. Henry Taylor, barely, or little better than barely, enables us to say of him that verse is his right-hand and prose his left. Still, after some little demur, we *are* able to say it; and we call him a poet.

It must not be supposed that this is by any means a matter of mere fluency, correctness, or ease of numbers. Macaulay wrote verses far superior in these particulars to many of Mr. Henry Taylor's and many of Wordsworth's. Yet verse was, unequivocally, Macaulay's left-hand; and after adolescence, few people can read his verse for poetry. If I were not unwilling to rouse the prejudice of (I fear!) most of my readers, I should here add Edgar Poe; and, indeed, I really cannot spare him as an illustration. He must have some queer hybrid place, all to himself (which it would take an essay to define); but though he may be said to have felt verse his right-hand medium of expression, some few of us hesitate to call him a poet. Not to complicate this matter, let us come at once to the point. What is it that in excellent verse differentiates<sup>1</sup> that which is poetry and that which is not? Not mere fluency, but unconscious fluency; in a word, simplicity. Whatever art may do for the poet, he must be a *simple* musician to begin with.

In looking rapidly over this poem of George Eliot's I have — let me confess it — I have been inclined to fear that this "note" of simplicity is wanting. And, in spite of an abundance of fine passages, I fear, also, there is not the perfect fluency of use and wont. It has been maintained, under shelter of Elizabethan models, that you may

<sup>1</sup> I have seen this word objected to as a scientific foppery; but in its form of *to difference*, the verb is a good old English verb.

do almost anything in dramatic blank verse, in the way of lengthening and shortening the line. I object to the doctrine, and maintain that the Elizabethan examples cited are, in many instances, mere bits of negligence; and, in others, roughnesses of workmanship belonging to the lusty youth of a new art. Blank verse means ten-syllable iambic lines. If there are deviations from this form, as there often are, and should be, they must be regulated deviations, not accidental intrusions of other forms. . . . The versification of "The Spanish Gypsy" often breaks out into the very highest excellence; but it too often wants spontaneity and simplicity.

As the same observation applies to the lyrics, one has little hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the primal peculiarity which distinguishes the singer from the sayer is either lacking in George Eliot or that its function has suffered from disuse. I still hesitate to say suffered irreparably, because I still think the orbit of a genius like George Eliot's incalculable. With such a noble ambition, and such immense resources, one may do almost anything. Thus, though I confess I *now* think it improbable that George Eliot will ever exhibit in a poem the true simplicity of the singer, and compel her readers to admit that her music is better than her speech, I hesitate, or well-nigh hesitate, in saying even so much as that. It is very pathetic that a noble ambition should come so near its mark and yet fail. Only what are we to do? The truth must be spoken.

Against the presumption raised by the bulk of the writing must, in fairness, be set the evidence of particular passages, in which the author attains such high excellence that if one had seen those



passages alone, there would have been no hesitation or doubt on the score of melody. A few of these, in some of which the reader will catch fine touches of Elizabethan inspiration, I will pick out of the mass.

Take, for an example, this description of Zarca: —

“He is of those  
Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny  
And make the prophets lie.”

And this: —

“My vagabonds are a seed more generous,  
Quick as the serpent, loving as the hound,  
And beautiful as disinherited gods.  
They have a promised land beyond the sea.”

And this: —

“Spring afternoons, when delicate shadows fall  
Pencilled upon the grass; high summer morns  
When white light rains upon the quiet sea  
And cornfields flush with ripeness.”

And this: —

“Present and silent and unchangeable  
As a celestial portent.”

Lastly, the best lyric in the poem: —

“The world is great: the birds all fly from me,  
The stars are golden fruit upon a tree  
All out of reach: my little sister went,  
And I am lonely.

“The world is great: I tried to mount the hill  
Above the pines, where the light lies so still,  
But it rose higher: little Lisa went,  
And I am lonely.

“The world is great: the wind comes rushing by,  
I wonder where it comes from; sea-birds cry  
And hurt my heart; my little sister went,  
And I am lonely.

“The world is great: the people laugh and talk,  
And make loud holiday: how fast they walk!  
I'm lame, they push me: little Lisa went,  
And I am lonely.”

Besides the want of spontaneity and simplicity in the verse, there are other points which make us feel, with whatever reluctance to admit the thing we undoubtingly see, that in "The Spanish Gypsy" something is wanting, and in that something everything that endears a poem *as a poem*. The writing has the diffuseness of literature rather than the condensation of poetry; and, admirable as some of it is, we wish it away: at the lowest, we say to ourselves, if a poet had had to utter this, our pleasure would have been perfect; but, as it is, what is before us is almost too good, and yet it is not good enough; it does not compel us to think, *le poëte a le frisson*, either while we read or afterwards. There is too much aggregation and accumulation about it; we are set thinking, and set feeling; we are agitated; but we are not thrilled by any single sudden notes. Lastly, or all but lastly, some of the frequent touches of humorous detail are fatal:—

"Enter the Duke, Pablo, and Annibal,  
Exit the cat, retreating towards the dark."

This, and all this kind of thing, is gravely wrong in a poem. In some cases the phraseology has this species of modern familiarity and curtness; in others, the equally distinguishable *largo* of the modern philosophic manner, while what is supremely needed, namely, finish, is what we in vain go longing for.

Finally, the intellectual groundwork, or outline, of the poem shows far too plainly under the colouring of passion and the movement of the story. Since "Silas Marner" we have had no book from George Eliot to which this criticism would not, in some degree, be applicable. There is not room

here for any exhibition of all the recurring ideas of George Eliot's writings, but one in particular has been growing more and more prominent since "Silas Marner," and of which the first hint is in "The Mill on the Floss." "If the past is not to bind us," said Maggie Tulliver, in answer to the importunities of Stephen Guest, "what is?" In a noticeable and well-remembered review of Mr. Lecky's "History of Rationalism," George Eliot told us that the best part of our lives was made up of organized traditions (I quote from memory, but the meaning was plain). Putting these two things together, we get the intellectual ground-plan of "The Spanish Gypsy." Perhaps the illustrious author of the poem would resent the idea that any moral was intended to be conveyed by her recent writings; but, assuredly, this moral is thrust upon us everywhere, in a way which implies, if not intention, very eager belief.

Leaving the workmanship and the intellectual conception, or interwoven moral criticism, of the poem, and coming to the story, I am sure of only echoing what all the world will say when I call this in the highest degree poetic; and poetically dramatic, too. I must add, and with emphasis, that the story seems to me to gain, as a story, by this mode of presentation, — as I firmly believe "Romola" would have gained, if the question of perfect poetic expression could have been got over. In other words, although the manner of the novelist too often obtrudes itself in "The Spanish Gypsy," the author has told the story more effectingly, and with much more of truthfulness and local colour and manner, than she would have done if she had been writing it as a novel. Compare, for example, what I think are among the

very finest things George Eliot has ever done, — the scene between Juan the troubadour and the Gypsy girls, at the opening of Book III., and the scene in which Don Amador reads to the retainers of Don Silva from “Las Siete Partidas” the passage beginning, “Et esta gentileza aviene en tres maneras” (the critical reader who stumbles at the “et” must be informed that this is thirteenth-century Spanish), — compare these two scenes, I say, with the first scene in the barber’s shop, and the scene of the Florentine joke, in “Romola,” and note how very much the author gains by assuming the dramatic form. I have heard readers of much critical ability, and much poetic and dramatic instinct, too, complain that they did not see the force of those scenes in “Romola;” but it must be an incredibly dull person that misses the force of those scenes in “The Spanish Gypsy.” The love-passages, also, are exquisitely beautiful; and in them again the author has gained by using the dramatic form. I dare to add that she has, however, lost by some of the (so to speak) “stage-directions.” We don’t want to be told how a man and woman of the type of Don Silva and Fedalma<sup>1</sup> look when they are saying certain things. We can feel pretty sure when the moment would be too sweet and solemn even for kissing. As Sam Slick said, “Natur’ teaches that air.”

The story of “The Spanish Gypsy” is simply this: Fedalma, a Zincala, is lost in her early childhood, and brought up by a Spanish duchess, Don Silva’s mother. As she grows to womanhood Silva loves her, and she is on the point of marrying him

<sup>1</sup> I do not remember having ever seen this name before; it is an exquisitely musical word, and, I suppose, is intended to mean Faith of the Soul; or, more intelligibly to *some* people (not to be envied), Spiritual Fidelity.



when the narrative opens. But Fedalma's father, Zarca, a Gypsy Moses, Hiawatha, or both, devoted to the regeneration of his tribe, suddenly appears upon the scene and claims his daughter. Will she marry Don Silva, or go with her father and be the priestess of a new faith to the Zincali? She decides to accompany her father. Upon this Silva renounces his position as a Spanish noble and Christian knight and becomes a Zincalo. This implies the relinquishment of his post as commander of the town and fortress of Bedmár, which it is his duty to guard against the Moors; but he is not aware, at the time he takes the Gypsy oath, that Zarca is already in league with the Moors to take the fortress. Zarca and the Moors, however, succeed in investing the place, and some noble Spaniards, friends of Silva's, including his uncle, Father Isidor, are slain. Mad with remorse and rage, Silva stabs Zarca, but is allowed to go free. The poem closes with the departure of Silva to obtain absolution from the Pope, in order that he may recommence the career of a Christian knight, and the departure of Fedalma to begin, as best she may, the work bequeathed to her by her father, namely, the regeneration of the Zincali.

One thing is obvious on the face of this story, — that Silva was guilty, in so far as he was an apostate. But there will not be wanting readers who when asking the question who was the cause of all the misery with which the narrative overflows, will say, Fedalma. It was all very well to say that her past bound her. But which past? When Zarca started up, she was pledged by her "past" to Silva, and she loved him. What Zarca imported into the situation was, as lawyers say, new matter. The morrow would have seen her

married to Silva; and what *then*, if Zarca had appeared upon the stage with his Gypsy patriotism? All the future was dark to her, there was no reason whatever to believe that either she or Zarca would be able to regenerate the Gypsies; there was present actual proof that she was essential to Silva, life of his life, and the bond of his being. What right had she to forsake him? It is idle to discuss this, but since, as far as I can make out, there is distinct teaching in the poem, and that teaching is of no force unless Fedalma was, *beyond question*, right, it is perfectly fair and appropriate to suggest that there is room for question. It seems to me a little curious that George Eliot does not see that the same reason which made Sephardo, the astrologer, a son first and a Jew afterwards, would make Fedalma a betrothed woman first and a Zincala next.

But I do not dwell upon this point, because I look forward to another opportunity of dealing with what we are now entitled to assume is George Eliot's evangel, —

“ . . . that Supreme, the irreversible Past.”

Irreversible, no doubt, but — “ Supreme!” The reader must not imagine that I am darting cap-tiously at a word here. Not at all. George Eliot has a very distinct meaning, which is very distinctly affiliated to a certain mode of thought. To this mode of thought may be traced the astounding discords of her late writings, or rather the one astounding discord which runs through them.

In submitting to the world a poem, George Eliot is under one serious disadvantage. There are certain particulars in which she is not likely, in verse, to excel her own prose. Clear and pro-

found conception, and emphatic, luminous, and affecting presentation of character, is one of them. The power of inventing dramatic situation is another. In these particulars "The Spanish Gypsy" falls behind nothing that this distinguished writer has done; though I do not myself feel that either Fedalma or Zarca is dramatically presented to us. Indeed, vivid as George Eliot's painting of character always is, and profoundly intelligent, I never thought it dramatic. Nor is it. Here, as in the other books of George Eliot, character is always most vividly described and analyzed; and what the people do is, of course, in exact accordance with what is described; but none of them reveal themselves without having had the advantage of some criticism. None of them, that is to say, reveal themselves by action only, or by action and speech only, unless the speech takes a critical form. Zarca is shadowy, and Fedalma shadowy. But Juan and Silva we understand well because they are criticised; and Isidor the prior, and Sephardo the Jew, we understand well, because their talk is criticism of a kind which only a certain order of mind could produce. Perhaps the finest portions of the poem lie in some of these critical or quasi-critical passages. Let us take "The Astrologer's Study":—

"A room high up in Abderahman's tower,  
 A window open to the still warm eve,  
 And the bright disk of royal Jupiter.  
 Lamps burning low make little atmospheres  
 Of light amid the dimness; here and there  
 Show books and phials, stones and instruments.  
 In carved dark-oaken chair, unpillowed, sleeps  
 Right in the rays of Jupiter a small man,  
 In skull-cap bordered close with crisp gray curls,  
 And loose black gown showing a neck and breast  
 Protected by a dim-green amulet;  
 Pale-faced, with finest nostril wont to breathe  
 Ethereal passion in a world of thought;

## 12 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Eyebrows jet-black and firm, yet delicate;  
 Beard scant and grizzled; mouth shut firm, with curves  
 So subtly turned to meanings exquisite,  
 You seem to read them as you read a word  
 Full-vowelled, long descended, pregnant, — rich  
 With legacies from long, laborious lives."

Juan's criticism of himself: —

"I can unleash my fancy if you wish  
 And hunt for phantoms: shoot an airy guess  
 And bring down airy likelihood, — some lie  
 Masked cunningly to look like royal truth  
 And cheat the shooter, while King Fact goes free,  
 Or else some image of reality  
 That doubt will handle and reject as false.  
 Ask for conjecture, — I can thread the sky  
 Like any swallow, but, if you insist  
 On knowledge that would guide a pair of feet  
 Right to Bedmár, across the Moorish bounds,  
 A mule that dreams of stumbling over stones  
 Is better stored."

And, assuredly, I must not omit the study of the  
 character of Silva himself: —

"A man of high-wrought strain, fastidious  
 In his acceptance, dreading all delight  
 That speedy dies and turns to carrion:  
 His senses much exacting, deep instilled  
 With keen imagination's difficult needs; —  
 Like strong-limbed monsters studded o'er with eyes,  
 Their hunger checked by overwhelming vision,  
 Or that fierce lion in symbolic dream  
 Snatched from the ground by wings and new-endowed  
 With a man's thought-propelled relenting heart.  
 Silva was both the lion and the man;  
 First hesitating shrank, then fiercely sprang,  
 Or having sprung, turned pallid at his deed  
 And loosed the prize, paying his blood for naught.  
 A nature half-transformed, with qualities  
 That oft bewrayed each other, elements  
 Not blent but struggling, breeding strange effects,  
 Passing the reckoning of his friends or foes.  
 Haughty and generous, grave and passionate;  
 With tidal moments of devoutest awe,  
 Sinking anon to farthest ebb of doubt;  
 Deliberating ever, till the sting  
 Of a recurrent ardour made him rush  
 Right against reasons that himself had drilled  
 And marshalled painfully. A spirit framed  
 Too proudly special for obedience,  
 Too subtly pondering for mastery:  
 Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,



## GEORGE ELIOT AS A POET 13

Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,  
Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness  
And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.  
But look less curiously: life itself  
May not express us all, may leave the worst  
And the best too, like tunes in mechanism  
Never awaked. In various catalogues  
Objects stand variously."

There is only one living mind which could have given us poetico-psychological studies of human character like these. There is no comparison in range of faculty between such a mind and John Clare's. Is it not strange, and almost pathetic, that an uncultivated peasant could sing, and touch us with music, as no speech could; and yet that a highly cultivated mind like George Eliot's should almost overwhelm our judgment by the richness and volume of what it pours forth in the name of song; and yet that we are compelled to say the bird-note is missing?

MATTHEW BROWNE.

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## EXTRACTS FROM GEORGE ELIOT'S LIFE

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*(Edited by J. W. CROSS)*

**A**MONG my wife's papers were four or five pages of manuscript headed "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy and Tragedy in General." There is no evidence as to the date at which this fragment was written, and it seems to have been left unfinished. But there was evidently some care to preserve it; and as I think she would not have objected to its presentation, I give it here exactly as it stands. It completes the history of the poem.

"The subject of 'The Spanish Gypsy' was originally suggested to me by a picture which hangs in the Scuola di' San Rocco at Venice, over the door of the large Sala containing Tintoretto's frescos. It is an Annunciation, said to be by Titian. Of course I had seen numerous pictures of this subject before; and the subject had always attracted me. But in this my second visit to the Scuola di' San Rocco, this small picture of Titian's, pointed out to me for the first time, brought a new train of thought. It occurred to me that here was a great dramatic motive of the same class as those used by the Greek dramatists, yet specifically differing from them. A young maiden, believing herself to be on the eve of the chief event of her life, — marriage, — about to share in the ordinary lot of womanhood, full of young hope, has suddenly announced to her that she is chosen

to fulfil a great destiny, entailing a terribly different experience from that of ordinary womanhood. She is chosen, not by any momentary arbitrariness, but as a result of foregoing hereditary conditions: she obeys. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.' Here, I thought, is a subject grander than that of Iphigenia, and it has never been used. I came home with this in my mind, meaning to give the motive a clothing in some suitable set of historical and local conditions. My reflections brought me nothing that would serve me, except that moment in Spanish history when the struggle with the Moors was attaining its climax, and when there was the gypsy race present under such conditions as would enable me to get my heroine and the hereditary claim on her among the gypsies. I required the opposition of race to give the need for renouncing the expectation of marriage. I could not use the Jews or the Moors, because the facts of their history were too conspicuously opposed to the working out of my catastrophe. Meanwhile the subject had become more and more pregnant to me. I saw it might be taken as a symbol of the part which is played in the general human lot by hereditary conditions in the largest sense, and of the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions; for even in cases of just antagonism to the narrow view of hereditary claims, the whole background of the particular struggle is made up of our inherited nature. Suppose for a moment that our conduct at great epochs was determined entirely by reflection, without the immediate intervention of feeling, which supersedes reflection, our determination as to the right would consist in an adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities

of our lot, partly as to our natural constitution, partly as sharers of life with our fellow-beings. Tragedy consists in the terrible difficulty of this adjustment, —

“The dire strife of poor Humanity’s afflicted will,  
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.”

Looking at individual lots, I seemed to see in each the same story, wrought out with more or less of tragedy, and I determined the elements of my drama under the influence of these ideas.

“In order to judge properly of the dramatic structure it must not be considered first in the light of doctrinal symbolism, but in the light of a tragedy representing some grand collision in the human lot. And it must be judged accordingly. A good tragic subject must represent a possible, sufficiently probable, not a common, action; and to be really tragic, it must represent irreparable collision between the individual and the general (in differing degrees of generality). It is the individual with whom we sympathize, and the general of which we recognize the irresistible power. The truth of this test will be seen by applying it to the greatest tragedies. The collision of Greek tragedy is often that between hereditary, entailed Nemesis and the peculiar individual lot, awakening our sympathy, of the particular man or woman whom the Nemesis is shown to grasp with terrific force. Sometimes, as in the Oresteia, there is the clashing of two irreconcilable requirements, — two duties, as we should say in these times. The murder of the father must be avenged by the murder of the mother, which must again be avenged. These two tragic relations of the individual and general, and of two irreconcilable ‘oughts,’ may



be — will be — seen to be almost always combined. The Greeks were not taking an artificial, entirely erroneous standpoint in their art, — a standpoint which disappeared altogether with their religion and their art. They had the same essential elements of life presented to them as we have, and their art symbolized these in grand schematic forms. The Prometheus represents the ineffectual struggle to redeem the small and miserable race of man, against the stronger adverse ordinances that govern the frame of things with a triumphant power. Coming to modern tragedies, what is it that makes Othello a great tragic subject? A story simply of a jealous husband is elevated into a most pathetic tragedy by the hereditary conditions of Othello's lot, which give him a subjective ground for distrust. Faust, Rigoletto ('Le Roi s'Amuse'), Brutus. It might be a reasonable ground of objection against the whole structure of 'The Spanish Gypsy,' if it were shown that the action is outrageously improbable, — lying outside all that can be congruously conceived of human actions. It is *not* a reasonable ground of objection that they would have done better to act otherwise, any more than it is a reasonable objection against the Iphigenia that Agamemnon would have done better not to sacrifice his daughter.

“As renunciations coming under the same great class, take the renunciation of marriage where marriage cannot take place without entailing misery on the children.

“A tragedy has not to expound why the individual must give way to the general; it has to show that it is compelled to give way, — the tragedy consisting in the struggle involved, and often in the entirely calamitous issue in spite of a grand

submission. Silva presents the tragedy of entire rebellion; Fedalma, of a grand submission, which is rendered vain by the effects of Silva's rebellion; Zarca, the struggle for a great end, rendered vain by the surrounding conditions of life.

“Now, what is the fact about our individual lots? A woman, say, finds herself on the earth with an inherited organization: she may be lame, she may inherit a disease, or what is tantamount to a disease; she may be a negress, or have other marks of race repulsive in the community where she is born, etc. One may go on for a long while without reaching the limits of the commonest inherited misfortunes. It is almost a mockery to say to such human beings, ‘Seek your own happiness.’ The utmost approach to well-being that can be made in such a case is through large resignation and acceptance of the inevitable, with as much effort to overcome any disadvantage as good sense will show to be attended with a likelihood of success. Any one may say, that is the dictate of mere rational reflection. But calm can in hardly any human organism be attained by rational reflection. Happily, we are not left to that. Love, pity, constituting sympathy, and generous joy with regard to the lot of our fellow-men comes in, — has been growing since the beginning, — enormously enhanced by wider vision of results, by an imagination actively interested in the lot of mankind generally; and these feelings become piety, — that is, loving, willing submission and heroic Promethean effort towards high possibilities, which may result from our individual life.

“There is really no moral ‘sanction’ but this inward impulse. The will of God is the same thing as the will of other men, compelling us to

work and avoid what they have seen to be harmful to social existence. Disjoined from any perceived good, the divine will is simply so much as we have ascertained of the facts of existence which compel obedience at our peril. Any other notion comes from the supposition of arbitrary revelation.

“That favourite view, expressed so often in Clough's poems, of doing duty in blindness as to the result, is likely to deepen the substitution of egoistic yearnings for really moral impulses. We cannot be utterly blind to the results of duty, since that cannot be duty which is not already judged to be for human good. To say the contrary is to say that mankind have reached no inductions as to what is for their good or evil.

“The art which leaves the soul in despair is laming to the soul, and is denounced by the healthy sentiment of an active community. The consolatory elements in ‘The Spanish Gypsy’ are derived from two convictions or sentiments which so conspicuously pervade it that they may be said to be its very warp, on which the whole action is woven. These are: (1) The importance of individual deeds; (2) The all-sufficiency of the soul's passions in determining sympathetic action.

“In *Silva* is presented the claim of fidelity to social pledges; in *Fedalma*, the claim constituted by an hereditary lot less consciously shared.

“With regard to the supremacy of love: if it were a fact without exception that man or woman never did renounce the joys of love, there could never have sprung up a notion that such renunciation could present itself as a duty. If no parents had ever cared for their children, how could parental affection have been reckoned among the elements of life? But what are the facts in relation

to this matter? Will any one say that faithfulness to the marriage tie has never been regarded as a duty, in spite of the presence of the profoundest passion experienced after marriage? Is Guinevere's conduct the type of duty?"



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# Poems of George Eliot

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## THE SPANISH GYPSY

### BOOK I

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'**T**IS the warm South, where Europe spreads  
her lands

Like fretted leaflets, breathing on the deep:  
Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love  
(A calm earth-goddess crowned with corn and  
vines)

On the Mid Sea that moans with memories,  
And on the untravelled Ocean, whose vast tides  
Pant dumbly passionate with dreams of youth.  
This river, shadowed by the battlements  
And gleaming silvery towards the northern sky,  
Feeds the famed stream that waters Andalus  
And loiters, amorous of the fragrant air,  
By Córdoba and Seville to the bay  
Fronting Algarva and the wandering flood  
Of Guadiana. This deep mountain gorge  
Slopes widening on the olive-pluméd plains  
Of fair Granáda: one far-stretching arm  
Points to Elvira, one to eastward heights  
Of Alpujarras where the new-bathed Day  
With oriflamme uplifted o'er the peaks  
Saddens the breasts of northward-looking snows  
That loved the night, and soared with soaring  
stars;

Flashing the signals of his nearing swiftness  
 From Almería's purple-shadowed bay  
 On to the far-off rocks that gaze and glow, —  
 On to Alhambra, strong and ruddy heart  
 Of glorious Morisma, gasping now,  
 A maiméd giant in his agony.  
 This town that dips its feet within the stream,  
 And seems to sit a tower-crowned Cybele,  
 Spreading her ample robe adown the rocks,  
 Is rich Bedmár: 't was Moorish long ago,  
 But now the Cross is sparkling on the Mosque,  
 And bells make Catholic the trembling air.  
 The fortress gleams in Spanish sunshine now  
 ('T is south a mile before the rays are Moorish), —  
 Hereditary jewel, agraffe bright  
 On all the many-titled privilege  
 Of young Duke Silva. No Castilian knight  
 That serves Queen Isabel has higher charge;  
 For near this frontier sits the Moorish king,  
 Not Boabdil the waverer, who usurps  
 A throne he trembles in, and fawning licks  
 The feet of conquerors, but that fierce lion  
 Grisly El Zagal, who has made his lair  
 In Guadix' fort, and rushing thence with strength,  
 Half his own fierceness, half the untainted heart  
 Of mountain bands that fight for holiday,  
 Wastes the fair lands that lie by Alcalá,  
 Wreathing his horse's neck with Christian heads.

To keep the Christian frontier, — such high trust  
 Is young Duke Silva's; and the time is great.  
 (What times are little? To the sentinel  
 That hour is regal when he mounts on guard.)  
 - The fifteenth century since the Man Divine  
 Taught and was hated in Capernaum  
 Is near its end, — is falling as a husk

Away from all the fruit its years have ripened.  
The Moslem faith, now flickering like a torch  
In a night struggle on this shore of Spain,  
Glares, a broad column of advancing flame,  
Along the Danube and Illyrian shore  
Far into Italy, where eager monks,  
Who watch in dreams and dream the while they  
watch,

See Christ grow paler in the baleful light,  
Crying again the cry of the forsaken.  
But faith, the stronger for extremity,  
Becomes prophetic, hears the far-off tread  
Of western chivalry, sees downward sweep  
The archangel Michael with the gleaming sword,  
And listens for the shriek of hurrying fiends  
Chased from their revels in God's sanctuary.  
So trusts the monk, and lifts appealing eyes  
To the high dome, the Church's firmament,  
Where the blue light-pierced curtain, rolled away  
Reveals the throne and Him who sits thereon.  
So trust the men whose best hope for the world  
Is ever that the world is near its end:  
Impatient of the stars that keep their course  
And make no pathway for the coming Judge.

But other futures stir the world's great heart.  
The West now enters on the heritage  
Won from the tombs of mighty ancestors,  
The seeds, the gold, the gems, the silent harps  
That lay deep buried with the memories  
Of old renown.

No more, as once in sunny Avignon,  
The poet-scholar spreads the Homeric page,  
And gazes sadly, like the deaf at song;  
For now the old epic voices ring again  
And vibrate with the beat and melody

Stirred by the warmth of old Ionian days.  
 The martyred sage, the Attic orator,  
 Immortally incarnate, like the gods,  
 In spiritual bodies, wingéd words  
 Holding a universe impalpable,  
 Find a new audience. Forevermore,  
 With grander resurrection than was feigned  
 Of Attila's fierce Huns, the soul of Greece  
 Conquers the bulk of Persia. The maimed form  
 Of calmly joyous beauty, marble-limbed,  
 Yet breathing with the thought that shaped its  
 lips,

Looks mild reproach from out its opened grave  
 At creeds of terror; and the vine-wreathed god  
 Rising, a stifled question from the silence,  
 Fronts the pierced Image with the crown of thorns.  
 The soul of man is widening towards the past:  
 No longer hanging at the breast of life  
 Feeding in blindness to his parentage, —  
 Quenching all wonder with Omnipotence,  
 Praising a name with indolent piety, —  
 He spells the record of his long descent,  
 More largely conscious of the life that was  
 And from the height that shows where morning  
 shone

On far-off summits pale and gloomy now,  
 The horizon widens round him, and the west  
 Looks vast with untracked waves whereon his gaze  
 Follows the flight of the swift-vanished bird  
 That like the sunken sun is mirrored still  
 Upon the yearning soul within the eye.  
 And so in Córdoba through patient nights  
 Columbus watches, or he sails in dreams  
 Between the setting stars and finds new day;  
 Then wakes again to the old weary days,  
 Girds on the cord and frock of pale Saint Francis,



And like him zealous pleads with foolish men.  
"I ask but for a million maravedis:  
Give me three caravels to find a world,  
New shores, new realms, new soldiers for the  
Cross.

*Son cosas grandes!*" Thus he pleads in vain;  
Yet faints not utterly, but pleads anew,  
Thinking, "God means it, and has chosen me."  
For this man is the pulse of all mankind  
Feeding an embryo future, offspring strange  
Of the fond Present, that with mother-prayers  
And mother-fancies looks for championship  
Of all her loved beliefs and old-world ways  
From that young Time she bears within her womb.  
The sacred places shall be purged again,  
The Turk converted, and the Holy Church,  
Like the mild Virgin with the outspread robe,  
Shall fold all tongues and nations lovingly.

But since God works by armies, who shall be  
The modern Cyrus? Is it France most Christian,  
Who with his lilies and brocaded knights,  
French oaths, French vices, and the newest style  
Of out-puffed sleeve, shall pass from west to east,  
A winnowing fan to purify the seed  
For fair millennial harvests soon to come?  
Or is not Spain the land of chosen warriors? —  
Crusaders consecrated from the womb,  
Carrying the sword-cross stamped upon their souls  
By the long yearnings of a nation's life,  
Through all the seven patient centuries  
Since first Pelayo and his resolute band  
Trusted the God within their Gothic hearts  
At Covadunga, and defied Mahound;  
Beginning so the Holy War of Spain  
That now is panting with the eagerness

Of labour near its end. The silver cross  
 Glitters o'er Malaga and streams dread light  
 On Moslem galleys, turning all their stores  
 From threats to gifts. What Spanish knight is he  
 Who, living now, holds it not shame to live  
 Apart from that hereditary battle  
 Which needs his sword? Castilian gentlemen  
 Choose not their task, — they choose to do it well.

The time is great, and greater no man's trust  
 Than his who keeps the fortress for his king,  
 Wearing great honours as some delicate robe  
 Brocaded o'er with names 't were sin to tarnish.  
 Born de la Cerda, Calatravan knight,  
 Count of Segura, fourth Duke of Bedmár,  
 Offshoot from that high stock of old Castile  
 Whose topmost branch is proud Medina Celi, —  
 Such titles with their blazonry are his  
 Who keeps this fortress, sworn Alcaide,  
 Lord of the valley, master of the town,  
 Commanding whom he will, himself commanded  
 By Christ his Lord who sees him from the Cross  
 And from bright heaven where the Mother  
 pleads; —

By good Saint James upon the milk-white steed,  
 Who leaves his bliss to fight for chosen Spain; —  
 By the dead gaze of all his ancestors; —  
 And by the mystery of his Spanish blood  
 Charged with the awe and glories of the past.  
 See now with soldiers in his front and rear  
 He winds at evening through the narrow streets  
 That toward the Castle gate climb devious:  
 His charger, of fine Andalusian stock,  
 An Indian beauty, black but delicate,  
 Is conscious of the herald trumpet note,  
 The gathering glances, and familiar ways

That lead fast homeward: she forgets fatigue,  
And at the light touch of the master's spur  
Thrills with the zeal to bear him royally,  
Arches her neck and clambers up the stones  
As if disdainful of the difficult steep.

Night-black the charger, black the rider's plume,  
But all between is bright with morning hues, —  
Seems ivory and gold and deep blue gems,  
And starry flashing steel and pale vermilion,  
All set in jasper: on his surcoat white  
Glitter the sword-belt and the jewelled hilt,  
Red on the back and breast the holy cross,  
And 'twixt the helmet and the soft-spun white  
Thick tawny wavelets like the lion's mane  
Turn backward from his brow, pale, wide, erect,  
Shadowing blue eyes, — blue as the rain-washed  
sky

That braced the early stem of Gothic kings  
He claims for ancestry. A goodly knight,  
A noble caballero, broad of chest  
And long of limb. So much the August sun,  
Now in the west but shooting half its beams  
Past a dark rocky profile toward the plain,  
At winding opportunities across the slope  
Makes suddenly luminous for all who see:  
For women smiling from the terraced roofs;  
For boys that prone on trucks with head up  
propped,

Lazy and curious, stare irreverent;  
For men who make obeisance with degrees  
Of good-will shading toward servility,  
Where good-will ends and secret fear begins,  
And curses, too, low-muttered through the teeth,  
Explanatory to the God of Shem.

Five, grouped within a whitened tavern court  
Of Moorish fashion, where the trellised vines

Purpling above their heads make odorous shade,  
 Note through the open door the passers-by,  
 Getting some rills of novelty to speed  
 The lagging stream of talk and help the wine.  
 'T is Christian to drink wine: whoso denies  
 His flesh at bidding save of Holy Church,  
 Let him beware and take to Christian sins  
 Lest he be taxed with Moslem sanctity.

The souls are five, the talkers only three.  
 (No time, most tainted by wrong faith and rule,  
 But holds some listeners and dumb animals.)  
 MINE HOST is one: he with the well-arched nose,  
 Soft-eyed, fat-handed, loving men for naught  
 But his own humour, patting old and young  
 Upon the back, and mentioning the cost  
 With confidential blandness, as a tax  
 That he collected much against his will  
 From Spaniards who were all his bosom friends:  
 Warranted Christian, — else how keep an inn,  
 Which calling asks true faith? though like his  
 wine

Of cheaper sort, a trifle over-new.  
 — His father was a convert, chose the chrism  
 As men choose physic, kept his chimney warm  
 With smokiest wood upon a Saturday,  
 Counted his gains and grudges on a chaplet,  
 And crossed himself asleep for fear of spies;  
 Trusting the God of Israel would see  
 'T was Christian tyranny that made him base.  
 Our host his son was born ten years too soon,  
 Had heard his mother call him Ephraim,  
 Knew holy things from common, thought it sin  
 To feast on days when Israel's children mourned,  
 So had to be converted with his sire,  
 To doff the awe he learned as Ephraim,



And suit his manners to a Christian name.  
But infant awe, that unborn breathing thing,  
Dies with what nourished it, can never rise  
From the dead womb and walk and seek new  
pasture.

Baptism seemed to him a merry game  
Not tried before, all sacraments a mode  
Of doing homage for one's property,  
And all religions a queer human whim  
Or else a vice, according to degrees:  
As, 't is a whim to like your chestnuts hot,  
Burn your own mouth and draw your face awry,  
A vice to pelt frogs with them, — animals  
Content to take life coolly. And Lorenzo  
Would have all lives made easy, even lives  
Of spiders and inquisitors, yet still  
Wishing so well to flies and Moors and Jews,  
He rather wished the others easy death;  
For loving all men clearly was deferred  
Till all men loved each other. Such mine Host  
With chiselled smile caressing Seneca,  
The solemn mastiff leaning on his knee.

His right-hand guest is solemn as the dog,  
Square-faced and massive: BLASCO is his name,  
A prosperous silversmith from Aragon;  
In speech not silvery, rather tuned as notes  
From a deep vessel made of plenteous iron,  
Or some great bell of slow but certain swing  
That, if you only wait, will tell the hour  
As well as flippant clocks that strike in haste  
And set off chiming a superfluous tune, —  
Like JUAN there, the spare man with the lute,  
Who makes you dizzy with his rapid tongue,  
Whirring athwart your mind with comment swift  
On speech you would have finished by and by,

### 30 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Shooting your bird for you while you are loading,  
Cheapening your wisdom as a pattern known,  
Woven by any shuttle on demand.  
Can never sit quite still, too: sees a wasp  
And kills it with a movement like a flash;  
Whistles low notes or seems to thrum his lute  
As a mere hyphen 'twixt two syllables  
Of any steadier man; walks up and down  
And snuffs the orange flowers and shoots a pea  
To hit a streak of light let through the awning.  
Has a queer face: eyes large as plums, a nose  
Small, round, uneven, like a bit of wax  
Melted and cooled by chance. Thin-fingered, lithe  
And as a squirrel noiseless, startling men  
Only by quickness. In his speech and look  
A touch of graceful wildness, as of things  
Not trained or tamed for uses of the world;  
Most like the Fauns that roamed in days of old  
About the listening whispering woods, and shared  
The subtler sense of sylvan ears and eyes  
Undulled by scheming thought, yet joined the rout  
Of men and women on the festal days,  
And played the syrinx too, and knew love's pains,  
Turning their anguish into melody.  
For Juan was a minstrel still, in times  
When minstrelsy was held a thing outworn.  
Spirits seem buried and their epitaph  
Is writ in Latin by severest pens,  
Yet still they flit above the trodden grave  
And find new bodies, animating them  
In quaint and ghostly way with antique souls.  
So Juan was a troubadour revived,  
Freshening life's dusty road with babbling rills  
Of wit and song, living 'mid harnessed men  
With limbs ungalled by armour, ready so  
To soothe them weary, and to cheer them sad.



Guest at the board, companion in the camp,  
A crystal mirror to the life around,  
Flashing the comment keen of simple fact  
Defined in words; lending brief lyric voice  
To grief and sadness; hardly taking note  
Of difference betwixt his own and others';  
But rather singing as a listener  
To the deep moans, the cries, the wild strong joys  
Of universal Nature, old yet young.  
Such Juan, the third talker, shimmering bright  
As butterfly or bird with quickest life.

The silent ROLDAN has his brightness too,  
But only in his spangles and rosettes.  
His party-coloured vest and crimson hose  
Are dulled with old Valencian dust, his eyes  
With straining fifty years at gilded balls  
To catch them dancing, or with brazen looks  
At men and women as he made his jests  
Some thousand times and watched to count the  
pence

His wife was gathering. His olive face  
Has an old writing in it, characters  
Stamped deep by grins that had no merriment,  
The soul's rude mark proclaiming all its blank;  
As on some faces that have long grown old  
In lifting tapers up to forms obscene  
On ancient walls and chuckling with false zest  
To please my lord, who gives the larger fee  
For that hard industry in apishness.  
Roldan would gladly never laugh again;  
Pensioned, he would be grave as any ox,  
And having beans and crumbs and oil secured  
Would borrow no man's jokes forevermore.  
'T is harder now because his wife is gone,  
Who had quick feet, and danced to ravishment

## 32 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Of every ring jewelled with Spanish eyes,  
But died and left this boy, lame from his birth,  
And sad and obstinate, though when he will  
He sings God-taught such marrow-thrilling strains  
As seem the very voice of dying Spring,  
A flute-like wail that mourns the blossoms gone,  
And sinks, and is not, like their fragrant breath,  
With fine transition on the trembling air.  
He sits as if imprisoned by some fear,  
Motionless, with wide eyes that seem not made  
For hungry glancing of a twelve-yearred boy  
To mark the living thing that he could tease,  
But for the gaze of some primeval sadness  
Dark twin with light in the creative ray.  
This little PABLO has his spangles too,  
And large rosettes to hide his poor left foot  
Rounded like any hoof (his mother thought  
God willed it so to punish all her sins).

I said the souls were five, — besides the dog.  
But there was still a sixth, with wrinkled face,  
Grave and disgusted with all merriment  
Not less than Roldan. It is ANNIBAL,  
The experienced monkey who performs the tricks,  
Jumps through the hoops, and carries round the  
hat.

Once full of sallies and impromptu feats,  
Now cautious not to light on aught that's new,  
Lest he be whipped to do it o'er again  
From A to Z, and make the gentry laugh:  
A misanthropic monkey, gray and grim,  
Bearing a lot that has no remedy  
For want of concert in the monkey tribe.

We see the company, above their heads  
The braided matting, golden as ripe corn,

Stretched in a curving strip close by the grapes,  
 Elsewhere rolled back to greet the cooler sky;  
 A fountain near, vase-shapen and broad-lipped,  
 Where timorous birds alight with tiny feet,  
 And hesitate and bend wise listening ears,  
 And fly away again with undipped beak.  
 On the stone floor the juggler's heaped-up goods,  
 Carpet and hoops, viol and tambourine,  
 Where Annibal sits perched with brows severe,  
 A serious ape whom none take seriously,  
 Obliged in this fool's world to earn his nuts  
 By hard buffoonery. We see them all,  
 And hear their talk, — the talk of Spanish men,  
 With Southern intonation, vowels turned  
 Caressingly between the consonants,  
 Persuasive, willing, with such intervals  
 As music borrows from the wooing birds,  
 That plead with subtly curving, sweet descent, —  
 And yet can quarrel, as these Spaniards can.

JUAN (*near the doorway*)

You hear the trumpet? There's old Ramon's  
 blast,  
 No bray but his can shake the air so well.  
 He takes his trumpeting as solemnly  
 As angel charged to wake the dead; thinks war  
 Was made for trumpeters, and their great art  
 Made solely for themselves who understand it.  
 His features all have shaped themselves to blowing,  
 And when his trumpet's bagged or left at home  
 He seems a chattel in a broker's booth,  
 A spoutless watering-can, a promise to pay  
 No sum particular. O fine old Ramon!  
 The blasts get louder and the clattering hoofs;  
 They crack the ear as well as heaven's thunder  
 For owls that listen blinking. There's the banner.

HOST (*joining him: the others follow to the door*)  
 The Duke has finished reconnoitring, then?  
 We shall hear news. They say he means a sally, —  
 Would strike El Zagal's Moors as they push home  
 Like ants with booty heavier than themselves;  
 Then, joined by other nobles with their bands,  
 Lay siege to Guadix. Juan, you're a bird  
 That nest within the Castle. What say you?

## JUAN

Naught, I say naught. 'T is but a toilsome game  
 To bet upon that feather Policy,  
 And guess where after twice a hundred puffs  
 'T will catch another feather crossing it:  
 Guess how the Pope will blow and how the king;  
 What force my lady's fan has; how a cough  
 Seizing the Padre's throat may raise a gust,  
 And how the queen may sigh the feather down.  
 Such catching at imaginary threads,  
 Such spinning twisted air, is not for me.  
 If I should want a game, I'll rather bet  
 On racing snails, two large, slow, lingering snails, —  
 No spurring, equal weights, — a chance sublime,  
 Nothing to guess at, pure uncertainty.  
 Here comes the Duke. They give but feeble shouts  
 And some look sour.

## HOST

That spoils a fair occasion.  
 Civility brings no conclusions with it,  
 And cheerful *Vivas* make the moments glide  
 Instead of grating like a rusty wheel.

## JUAN

O they are dullards, kick because they're stung,  
 And bruise a friend to show they hate a wasp.



## HOST

Best treat your wasp with delicate regard;  
When the right moment comes say, "By your  
leave,"

Use your heel — so! and make an end of him.  
That's if we talked of wasps; but our young  
Duke, —

Spain holds not a more gallant gentleman.  
Live, live, Duke Silva! 'T is a rare smile he has,  
But seldom seen.

## JUAN

A true hidalgo's smile,  
That gives much favour, but beseeches none.  
His smile is sweetened by his gravity:  
It comes like dawn upon Sierra snows,  
Seeming more generous for the coldness gone;  
Breaks from the calm, — a sudden opening flower  
On dark deep waters: one moment shrouded close,  
A mystic shrine, the next a full-rayed star,  
Thrilling, pulse-quickenning as a living word.  
I'll make a song of that.

## HOST

Prithee, not now.  
You'll fall to staring like a wooden saint,  
And wag your head as it were set on wires.  
Here's fresh sherbét. Sit, be good company.  
(*To BLASCO.*) You are a stranger, sir, and can-  
not know  
How our Duke's nature suits his princely frame.

## BLASCO

Nay, but I marked his spurs, — chased cunningly!  
A duke should know good gold and silver plate;



## 36 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Then he will know the quality of mine.  
I've ware for tables and for altars too,  
Our Lady in all sizes, crosses, bells:  
He'll need such weapons full as much as swords  
If he would capture any Moorish town.  
For, let me tell you, when a mosque is cleansed . . .

### JUAN

The demons fly so thick from sound of bells  
And smell of incense, you may see the air  
Streaked with them as with smoke. Why, they  
are spirits:  
You may well think how crowded they must be  
To make a sort of haze.

### BLASCO

I knew not that.  
Still, they're of smoky nature, demons are;  
And since you say so, — well, it proves the more  
The need of bells and censers. Ay, your Duke  
Sat well: a true hidalgo. I can judge, —  
Of harness specially. I saw the camp,  
The royal camp at Velez Malaga.  
'T was like the court of heaven, — such liveries!  
And torches carried by the score at night  
Before the nobles. Sirs, I made a dish  
To set an emerald in would fit a crown,  
For Don Alonzo, lord of Aguilar.  
Your Duke's no whit behind him in his mien  
Or harness either. But you seem to say  
The people love him not.

### HOST

They've naught against him.  
But certain winds will make men's temper bad.

When the Solano blows hot venom'd breath,  
It acts upon men's knives: steel takes to stabbing  
Which else, with cooler winds, were honest steel,  
Cutting but garlick. There 's a wind just now  
Blows right from Seville —

BLASCO

Ay, you mean the wind . . .  
Yes, yes, a wind that 's rather hot . . .

HOST

With fagots.

JUAN

A wind that suits not with our townsmen's blood.  
Abram, 't is said, objected to be scorched,  
And, as the learned Arabs vouch, he gave  
The antipathy in full to Ishmaël.  
'T is true, these patriarchs had their oddities.

BLASCO

Their oddities? I 'm of their mind, I know.  
Though, as to Abraham and Ishmaël,  
I 'm an old Christian, and owe naught to them  
Or any Jew among them. But I know  
We made a stir in Saragossa — we:  
The men of Aragon ring hard, — true metal.  
Sirs, I 'm no friend to heresy, but then  
A Christian's money is not safe. As how?  
A lapsing Jew or any heretic  
May owe me twenty ounces: suddenly  
He 's prisoned, suffers penalties, — 't is well:  
If men will not believe, 't is good to make them,  
But let the penalties fall on them alone.

The Jew is stripped, his goods are confiscate;  
 Now, where, I pray you, go my twenty ounces?  
 God knows, and perhaps the King may, but not I  
 And more, my son may lose his young wife's dower  
 Because 't was promised since her father's soul  
 Fell to wrong thinking. How was I to know?  
 I could but use my sense and cross myself.  
 Christian is Christian, — I give in, — but still  
 Taxing is taxing, though you call it holy.  
 We Saragossans liked not this new tax  
 They call the — nonsense, I'm from Aragon!  
 I speak too bluntly. But, for Holy Church,  
 No man believes more.

HOST

Nay, sir, never fear.  
 Good Master Roldan here is no delator.

ROLDAN (*starting from a reverie*)

You speak to me, sirs? I perform to-night —  
 The Plaça Santiago. Twenty tricks,  
 All different. I dance, too. And the boy  
 Sings like a bird. I crave your patronage.

BLASCO

Faith, you shall have it, sir. In travelling  
 I take a little freedom, and am gay.  
 You marked not what I said just now?

ROLDAN

I? no.

I pray your pardon. I've a twinging knee  
 That makes it hard to listen. You were saying?

BLASCO

Nay, it was naught. (*Aside to Host.*) Is it his deepness?

HOST

No.

He's deep in nothing but his poverty.

BLASCO

But 't was his poverty that made me think . . .

HOST

His piety might wish to keep the feasts  
As well as fasts. No fear; he hears not.

BLASCO

Good.

I speak my mind about the penalties,  
But, look you, I'm against assassination.  
You know my meaning — Master Arbués,  
The grand Inquisitor in Aragon.  
I knew naught, — paid no copper towards the deed.  
But I was there, at prayers, within the church.  
How could I help it? Why, the saints were there,  
And looked straight on above the altars. I . . .

JUAN

Looked carefully another way.

BLASCO

Why, at my beads.

'T was after midnight, and the canons all  
Were chanting matins. I was not in church  
To gape and stare. I saw the martyr kneel:  
I never liked the look of him alive, —

He was no martyr then. I thought he made  
 An ugly shadow as he crept athwart  
 The bands of light, then passed within the gloom  
 By the broad pillar. 'T was in our great Seo,  
 At Saragossa. The pillars tower so large  
 You cross yourself to see them, lest white Death  
 Should hide behind their dark. And so it was.  
 I looked away again and told my beads  
 Unthinkingly; but still a man has ears;  
 And right across the chanting came a sound  
 As if a tree had crashed above the roar  
 Of some great torrent. So it seemed to me;  
 For when you listen long and shut your eyes  
 Small sounds get thunderous. And he'd a shell  
 Like any lobster: a good iron suit  
 From top to toe beneath the innocent serge.  
 That made the telltale sound. But then came  
 shrieks.

The chanting stopped and turned to rushing feet,  
 And in the midst lay Master Arbués,  
 Felled like an ox. 'T was wicked butchery.  
 Some honest men had hoped it would have scared  
 The Inquisition out of Aragon.  
 'T was money thrown away, — I would say,  
 crime, —  
 Clean thrown away.

### Host

That was a pity now.  
 Next to a missing thrust, what irks me most  
 Is a neat well-aimed stroke that kills your man,  
 Yet ends in mischief, — as in Aragon.  
 It was a lesson to our people here.  
 Else there's a monk within our city walls,  
 A holy, high-born, stern Dominican,  
 They might have made the great mistake to kill.



BLASCO

What! is he? . . .

HOST

Yes; a Master Arbués

Of finer quality. The Prior here  
And uncle to our Duke.

BLASCO

He will want plate:

A holy pillar or a crucifix.

But, did you say, he was like Arbués?

JUAN

As a black eagle with gold beak and claws  
Is like a raven. Even in his cowl,  
Covered from head to foot, the Prior is known  
From all the black herd round. When he uncovers  
And stands white-frocked, with ivory face, his eyes  
Black-gleaming, black his coronet of hair  
Like shredded jasper, he seems less a man  
With struggling aims than pure incarnate Will,  
Fit to subdue rebellious nations, nay,  
That human flesh he breathes in, charged with  
passion

Which quivers in his nostril and his lip,  
But disciplined by long-indwelling will  
To silent labour in the yoke of law.

A truce to thy comparisons, Lorenzo!  
Thine is no subtle nose for difference;  
'T is dulled by feigning and civility.

HOST

Pooh, thou 'rt a poet, crazed with finding words  
May stick to things and seem like qualities.  
No pebble is a pebble in thy hands:

'T is a moon out of work, a barren egg,  
 Or twenty things that no man sees but thee.  
 Our father Isidor 's — a living saint,  
 And that to heresy, some townsmen think:  
 Saints should be dead, according to the Church.  
 My mind is this: the Father is so holy  
 'T were sin to wish his soul detained from bliss.  
 Easy translation to the realms above,  
 The shortest journey to the seventh heaven,  
 Is what I 'd never grudge him.

## BLASCO

Piously said.

Look you, I 'm dutiful, obey the Church  
 When there 's no help for it: I mean to say,  
 When Pope and Bishop and all customers  
 Order alike. But there be bishops now,  
 And were aforetime, who have held it wrong,  
 This hurry to convert the Jews. As, how?  
 Your Jew pays tribute to the bishop, say.  
 That 's good, and must please God, to see the  
 Church  
 Maintained in ways that ease the Christian 's purse.  
 Convert the Jew, and where 's the tribute, pray?  
 He lapses, too: 't is slippery work, conversion:  
 And then the holy taxing carries off  
 His money at one sweep. No tribute more!  
 He 's penitent or burnt, and there 's an end.  
 Now guess which pleases God . . .

## JUAN

Whether he likes  
 A well-burnt Jew or well-fed bishop best.

[While Juan put this problem theologic  
 Entered, with resonant step, another guest, —

A soldier: all his keenness in his sword,  
His eloquence in scars upon his cheek,  
His virtue in much slaying of the Moor:  
With brow well-creased in horizontal folds  
To save the space, as having naught to do:  
Lips prone to whistle whisperingly, — no tune,  
But trotting rhythm: meditative eyes,  
Most often fixed upon his legs and spurs:  
Invited much, and held good company:  
Styled Captain Lopez.]

LOPEZ

At your service, sirs.

JUAN

Ha, Lopez? Why, thou hast a face full-charged  
As any herald's. What news of the wars?

LOPEZ

Such news as is most bitter on my tongue.

JUAN

Then spit it forth.

HOST

Sit, Captain: here 's a cup,  
Fresh-filled. What news?

LOPEZ

'T is bad. We make no sally:  
We sit still here and wait whate'er the Moor  
Shall please to do.

HOST

Some townsmen will be glad.

## LOPEZ

Glad, will they be? But I'm not glad, not I,  
 Nor any Spanish soldier of clean blood.  
 But the Duke's wisdom is to wait a siege  
 Instead of laying one. Therefore — meantime —  
 He will be married straightway.

## HOST

Ha, ha, ha!

Thy speech is like an hourglass; turn it down  
 The other way, 't will stand as well, and say  
 The Duke will wed, therefore he waits a siege.  
 But what say Don Diego and the Prior?  
 The holy uncle and the fiery Don?

## LOPEZ

Oh there be sayings running all abroad  
 As thick as nuts o'erturned. No man need lack.  
 Some say, 't was letters changed the Duke's intent:  
 From Malaga, says Blas. From Rome, says  
 Quintin.

From spies at Guadix, says Sebastian.  
 Some say, 't is all a pretext, — say, the Duke  
 Is but a lapdog hanging on a skirt,  
 Turning his eyeballs upward like a monk:  
 'T was Don Diego said that, — so says Blas;  
 Last week, he said . . .

## JUAN

Oh do without the "said"!  
 Open thy mouth and pause in lieu of it.  
 I had as lief be pelted with a pea  
 Irregularly in the selfsame spot  
 As hear such iteration without rule,  
 Such torture of uncertain certainty.

LOPEZ

Santiago! Juan, thou art hard to please.  
I speak not for my own delighting, I.  
I can be silent, I.

BLASCO

Nay, sir, speak on!  
I like your matter well. I deal in plate.  
This wedding touches me. Who is the bride?

LOPEZ

One that some say the Duke does ill to wed.  
One that his mother reared — God rest her soul! —  
Duchess Diana, — she who died last year.  
A bird picked up away from any nest.  
Her name — the Duchess gave it — is Fedalma.  
No harm in that. But the Duke stoops, they say,  
In wedding her. And that 's the simple truth.

JUAN

Thy simple truth is but a false opinion:  
The simple truth of asses who believe  
Their thistle is the very best of food.  
Fie, Lopez, thou a Spaniard with a sword  
Dreamest a Spanish noble ever stoops  
By doing honour to the maid he loves!  
He stoops alone when he dishonours her.

LOPEZ

Nay, I said naught against her.

JUAN

Better not.  
Else I would challenge thee to fight with wits,



And spear thee through and through ere thou  
couldst draw

The bluntest word. Yes, yes, consult thy spurs:  
Spurs are a sign of knighthood, and should tell  
thee

That knightly love is blent with reverence  
As heavenly air is blent with heavenly blue.  
Don Silva's heart beats to a chivalric tune:  
He wills no highest-born Castilian dame,  
Betrothed to highest noble, should be held  
More sacred than Fedalma. He enshrines  
Her virgin image for the general worship  
And for his own, — will guard her from the world,  
Nay, his profaner self, lest he should lose  
The place of his religion. He does well.  
Naught can come closer to the poets' strain.

HOST

Or further from their practice, Juan, eh?  
If thou 'rt a specimen?

JUAN

Wrong, my Lorenzo!  
Touching Fedalma the poor poet plays  
A finer part even than the noble Duke.

LOPEZ

By making ditties, singing with round mouth  
Likest a crowing cock? Thou meanest that?

JUAN

Lopez, take physic, thou art getting ill,  
Growing descriptive; 't is unnatural.  
I mean, Don Silva's love expects reward,  
Kneels with a heaven to come; but the poor poet

Worships without reward, nor hopes to find  
 A heaven save in his worship. He adores  
 The sweetest woman for her sweetness' sake,  
 Joys in the love that was not born for him,  
 Because 't is lovingness, as beggars joy,  
 Warming their naked limbs on wayside walls,  
 To hear a tale of princes and their glory.  
 There's a poor poet (poor, I mean, in coin)  
 Worships Fedalma with so true a love  
 That if her silken robe were changed for rags,  
 And she were driven out to stony wilds  
 Barefoot, a scornéd wanderer, he would kiss  
 Her ragged garment's edge, and only ask  
 For leave to be her slave. Digest that, friend,  
 Or let it lie upon thee as a weight  
 To check light thinking of Fedalma.

LOPEZ

I?

I think no harm of her; I thank the saints  
 I wear a sword and peddle not in thinking.  
 'T is Father Marcos says she'll not confess  
 And loves not holy water; says her blood  
 Is infidel; says the Duke's wedding her  
 Is union of light with darkness.

JUAN

Tush!

[Now Juan — who by snatches touched his lute  
 With soft arpeggio, like a whispered dream  
 Of sleeping music, while he spoke of love, —  
 In jesting anger at the soldier's talk  
 Thrummed loud and fast, then faster and more  
 loud,  
 Till, as he answered, "Tush!" he struck a chord

Sudden as whip-crack close by Lopez' ear.  
 Mine host and Blasco smiled, the mastiff barked,  
 Roldan looked up and Annibal looked down,  
 Cautiously neutral in so new a case;  
 The boy raised longing, listening eyes that seemed  
 An exiled spirit's waiting in strained hope  
 Of voices coming from the distant land.  
 But Lopez bore the assault like any rock:  
*That* was not what he drew his sword at — he!  
 He spoke with neck erect.]

## LOPEZ

If that's a hint

The company should ask thee for a song,  
 Sing, then!

## HOST

Ay, Juan, sing, and jar no more.

Something brand new. Thou'rt wont to make  
 my ear  
 A test of novelties. Hast thou aught fresh?

## JUAN

As fresh as rain-drops. Here's a Cancion  
 Springs like a tiny mushroom delicate  
 Out of the priest's foul scandal of Fedalma.

[He precluded with questioning intervals,  
 Rising, then falling just a semitone,  
 In minor cadence, — sound with poiséd wing  
 Hovering and quivering towards the needed fall.  
 Then in a voice that shook the willing air  
 With masculine vibration sang this song.

*Should I long that dark were fair?*

*Say, O song!*

*Lacks my love aught, that I should long?*

*Dark the night, with breath all flow'rs,  
 And tender broken voice that fills  
 With ravishment the listening hours:  
 Whisperings, wooings,  
 Liquid ripples and soft ring-dove cooings  
 In low-toned rhythm that love's aching stills.  
 Dark the night,  
 Yet is she bright,  
 For in her dark she brings the mystic star,  
 Trembling yet strong, as is the voice of love,  
 From some unknown afar.  
 O radiant Dark! O darkly fostered ray!  
 Thou hast a joy too deep for shallow Day.*

While Juan sang, all round the tavern court  
 Gathered a constellation of black eyes.  
 Fat Lola leaned upon the balcony  
 With arms that might have pillowed Hercules  
 (Who built, 't is known, the mightiest Spanish  
 towns);  
 Thin Alda's face, sad as a wasted passion,  
 Leaned o'er the nodding baby's; 'twixt the rails  
 The little Pepe showed his two black beads,  
 His flat-ringed hair and small Semitic nose  
 Complete and tiny as a new-born minnow;  
 Patting his head and holding in her arms  
 The baby senior, stood Lorenzo's wife  
 All negligent, her kerchief discomposed  
 By little clutches, woman's coquetry  
 Quite turned to mother's cares and sweet content.  
 These on the balcony, while at the door  
 Gazed the lank boys and lazy-shouldered men.  
 'T is likely too the rats and insects peeped,  
 Being southern Spanish ready for a lounge.  
 The singer smiled, as doubtless Orpheus smiled,  
 To see the animals both great and small,

The mountainous elephant and scampering mouse,  
 Held by the ears in decent audience;  
 Then, when mine host desired the strain once  
     more,  
 He fell to preluding with rhythmic change  
 Of notes recurrent, soft as pattering drops  
 That fall from off the eaves in faëry dance  
 When clouds are breaking; till at measured pause  
 He struck, in rare responsive chords, a réfrain.]

## HOST

Come, then, a gayer rómaunt, if thou wilt:  
 I quarrel not with change. What say you,  
     Captain?

## LOPEZ

All's one to me. I note no change of tune,  
 Not I, save in the ring of horses' hoofs,  
 Or in the drums and trumpets when they call  
 To action or retreat. I ne'er could see  
 The good of singing.

## BLASCO

Why, it passes time, —  
 Saves you from getting over-wise: that's good.  
 For, look you, fools are merry here below,  
 Yet they will go to heaven all the same,  
 Having the sacraments; and, look you, heaven  
 Is a long holiday, and solid men,  
 Used to much business, might be ill at ease  
 Not liking play. And so in travelling  
 I shape myself betimes to idleness  
 And take fools' pleasures . . .

## HOST

Hark, the song begins!



JUAN (*sings*)

*Maiden, crowned with glossy blackness,  
Lithe as panther forest-roaming,  
Long-armed naiad, when she dances,  
On a stream of ether floating, —  
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Form all curves like softness drifted,  
Wave-kissed marble roundly dimpling,  
Far-off music slowly wingéd,  
Gently rising, gently sinking, —  
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Pure as rain-tear on a rose-leaf,  
Cloud high-born in noonday spotless,  
Sudden perfect as the dew-bead,  
Gem of earth and sky begotten, —  
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Beauty has no mortal father,  
Holy light her form engendered  
Out of tremor, yearning, gladness,  
Presage sweet and joy remembered, —  
Child of Light, Fedalma!*

BLASCO

Faith, a good song, sung to a stirring tune.  
I like the words returning in a round;  
It gives a sort of sense. Another such!

ROLDAN (*rising*)

Sirs, you will hear my boy. 'T is very hard  
When gentles sing for naught to all the town.  
How can a poor man live? And now 't is time  
I go to the Plaça, — who will give me pence  
When he can hear hidalgos and give naught?

## JUAN

True, friend. Be pacified. I'll sing no more.  
 Go thou, and we will follow. Never fear.  
 My voice is common as the ivy leaves,  
 Plucked in all seasons, — bears no price; the boy's  
 Is like the almond blossoms. Ah, he's lame!

## HOST

Load him not heavily. Here, Pedro! help.  
 Go with them to the Praça, take the hoops.  
 The sights will pay thee.

## BLASCO

I'll be there anon,  
 And set the fashion with a good white coin.  
 But let us see as well as hear.

## HOST

Ay, prithee.  
 Some tricks, a dance.

## BLASCO

Yes, 't is more rational.

ROLDAN (*turning round with the bundle and monkey on his shoulders*)

You shall see all, sirs. There's no man in Spain  
 Knows his art better. I've a twinging knee  
 Oft hinders dancing, and the boy is lame.  
 But no man's monkey has more tricks than mine.

[At this high praise the gloomy Annibal,  
 Mournful professor of high drollery,  
 Seemed to look gloomier, and the little troop  
 Went slowly out, escorted from the door

By all the idlers. From the balcony  
 Slowly subsided the black radiance  
 Of agate eyes, and broke in chattering sounds,  
 Coaxings and trappings, and the small hoarse  
     squeak  
 Of Pepe's reed. And our group talked again.]

### HOST

I'll get this juggler, if he quits him well,  
 An audience here as choice as can be lured.  
 For me, when a poor devil does his best,  
 'T is my delight to soothe his soul with praise.  
 What though the best be bad? remains the good  
 Of throwing food to a lean hungry dog.  
 I'd give up the best jugglery in life  
 To see a miserable juggler pleased.  
 But that's my humour. Crowds are malcontent,  
 And cruel as the Holy . . . Shall we go?  
 All of us now together?

### LOPEZ

Well, not I.

I may be there anon, but first I go  
 To the lower prison. There is strict command  
 That all our Gypsy prisoners shall to-night  
 Be lodged within the fort. They've forged enough  
 Of balls and bullets, — used up all the metal.  
 At morn to-morrow they must carry stones  
 Up the south tower. 'T is a fine stalwart band,  
 Fit for the hardest tasks. Some say, the queen  
 Would have the Gypsies banished with the Jews.  
 Some say, 't were better harness them for work.  
 They'd feed on any filth and save the Spaniard.  
 Some say — but I must go. 'T will soon be time  
 To head the escort. We shall meet again.

## BLASCO

Go, sir, with God (*exit* LOPEZ). A very proper man,

-And soldierly. But, for this banishment  
Some men are hot on, it ill pleases me.  
The Jews, now (sirs, if any Christian here  
Had Jews for ancestors, I blame him not;  
We cannot all be Goths of Aragon), —  
Jews are not fit for heaven, but on earth  
They are most useful. 'T is the same with mules,  
Horses, or oxen, or with any pig  
Except Saint Anthony's. They are useful here  
(The Jews, I mean) though they may go to hell.  
And, look you, useful sins, — why Providence  
Sends Jews to do 'em, saving Christian souls.  
The very Gypsies, curbed and harnessed well,  
Would make draught cattle, feed on vermin too,  
Cost less than grazing brutes, and turn bad food  
To handsome carcasses; sweat at the forge  
For little wages, and well drilled and flogged  
Might work like slaves, some Spaniards looking on.  
I deal in plate, and am no priest to say  
What God may mean, save when he means plain  
sense;

But when he sent the Gypsies wandering  
In punishment because they sheltered not  
Our Lady and Saint Joseph (and no doubt  
Stole the small ass they fled with into Egypt),  
Why send them here? 'T is plain he saw the use  
They 'd be to Spaniards. Shall we banish them,  
And tell God we know better? 'T is a sin.  
They talk of vermin; but, sirs, vermin large  
Were made to eat the small, or else to eat  
The noxious rubbish, and picked Gypsy men  
Might serve in war to climb, be killed, and fall,

To make an easy ladder. Once I saw  
 A Gypsy sorcerer, at a spring and grasp,  
 Kill one who came to seize him: talk of strength!  
 Nay, swiftness too, for while we crossed ourselves  
 He vanished like — say, like . . .

JUAN

A swift black snake,  
 Or like a living arrow fledged with will.

BLASCO

Why, did you see him, pray?

JUAN

Not then, but now  
 As painters see the many in the one.  
 We have a Gypsy in Bedmár whose frame  
 Nature compacted with such fine selection,  
 'T would yield a dozen types: all Spanish knights,  
 From him who slew Rolando at the pass  
 Up to the mighty Cid; all deities,  
 Thronging Olympus in fine attitudes;  
 Or all hell's heroes whom the poet saw  
 Tremble like lions, writhe like demigods.

HOST

Pause not yet, Juan, — more hyperbole!  
 Shoot upward still and flare in meteors  
 Before thou sink to earth in dull brown fact.

BLASCO

Nay, give me fact, high shooting suits not me.  
 I never stare to look for soaring larks.  
 What is this Gypsy?



## HOST

Chieftain of a band,  
 The Moor's allies, whom full a month ago  
 Our Duke surprised and brought as captives home.  
 He needed smiths, and doubtless the brave Moor  
 Has missed some useful scouts and archers too.  
 Juan's fantastic pleasure is to watch  
 These Gypsies forging, and to hold discourse  
 With this great chief, whom he transforms at  
 will  
 To sage or warrior, and like the sun  
 Plays daily at fallacious alchemy,  
 Turns sand to gold and dewy spider-webs  
 To myriad rainbows. Still the sand is sand,  
 And still in sober shade you see the web.  
 'T is so, I'll wager, with his Gypsy chief, —  
 A piece of stalwart cunning, nothing more.

## JUAN

No! My invention had been all too poor  
 To frame this Zarca as I saw him first.  
 'T was when they stripped him. In his chieftain's  
 gear,  
 Amidst his men he seemed a royal barb  
 Followed by wild-maned Andalusian colts.  
 He had a necklace of a strange device  
 In finest gold of unknown workmanship,  
 But delicate as Moorish, fit to kiss  
 Fedalma's neck, and play in shadows there.  
 He wore fine mail, a rich-wrought sword and belt,  
 And on his surcoat black a broidered torch,  
 A pine-branch flaming, grasped by two dark hands.  
 But when they stripped him of his ornaments  
 It was the bawbles lost their grace, not he.  
 His eyes, his mouth, his nostril, all inspired

With scorn that mastered utterance of scorn,  
 With power to check all rage until it turned  
 To ordered force, unleashed on chosen prey, —  
 It seemed the soul within him made his limbs  
 And made them grand. The bawbles were well  
     gone.  
 He stood the more a king, when bared to man.

## BLASCO

Maybe. But nakedness is bad for trade,  
 And is not decent. Well-wrought metal, sir,  
 Is not a bawble. Had you seen the camp,  
 The royal camp at Velez Malaga,  
 Ponce de Leon and the other dukes,  
 The king himself and all his thousand knights  
 For body-guard, 't would not have left you breath  
 To praise a Gypsy thus. A man's a man;  
 But when you see a king, you see the work  
 Of many thousand men. King Ferdinand  
 Bears a fine presence, and hath proper limbs;  
 But what though he were shrunken as a relic?  
 You'd see the gold and gems that cased him o'er,  
 And all the pages round him in brocade,  
 And all the lords, themselves a sort of kings,  
 Doing him reverence. That strikes an awe  
 Into a common man, — especially  
 A judge of plate.

## HOST

Faith, very wisely said.  
 Purge thy speech, Juan. It is over-full  
 Of this same Gypsy. Praise the Catholic King.  
 And come now, let us see the juggler's skill.

*The Praça Santiago*

'T is daylight still, but now the golden cross  
 Uplifted by the angel on the dome  
 Stands rayless in calm colour clear-defined  
 Against the northern blue; from turrets high  
 The flitting splendour sinks with folded wing  
 Dark-hid till morning, and the battlements  
 Wear soft relenting whiteness mellowed o'er  
 By summers generous and winters bland.  
 Now in the east the distance casts its veil,  
 And gazes with a deepening earnestness.  
 The old rain-fretted mountains in their robes  
 Of shadow-broken gray; the rounded hills  
 Reddened with blood of Titans, whose huge limbs,  
 Entombed within, feed full the hardy flesh  
 Of cactus green and blue, broad-sworded aloes;  
 The cypress soaring black above the lines  
 Of white court-walls; the jointed sugar-canes  
 Pale-golden with their feathers motionless  
 In the warm quiet; — all thought-teaching form  
 Utters itself in firm unshimmering hues.  
 For the great rock has screened the westering sun  
 That still on plains beyond streams vaporous gold  
 Among the branches; and within Bedmár  
 Has come the time of sweet serenity  
 When colour glows unglittering, and the soul  
 Of visible things shows silent happiness,  
 As that of lovers trusting though apart.  
 The ripe-cheeked fruits, the crimson-petalled  
     flowers;  
 The wingéd life that pausing seems a gem  
 Cunningly carven on the dark green leaf;  
 The face of man with hues supremely blent  
 To difference fine as of a voice 'mid sounds: —  
 Each lovely light-dipped thing seems to emerge

Flushed gravely from baptismal sacrament.  
All beauteous existence rests, yet wakes,  
Lies still, yet conscious, with clear open eyes  
And gentle breath and mild suffused joy.  
'T is day, but day that falls like melody  
Repeated on a string with graver tones, —  
Tones such as linger in a long farewell.

The Plaça widens in the passive air, —  
The Plaça Santiago, where the church,  
A mosque converted, shows an eyeless face  
Red-checked, faded, doing penance still, —  
Bearing with Moorish arch the imaged saint,  
Apostle, baron, Spanish warrior,  
Whose charger's hoofs trample the turbaned dead,  
Whose banner with the Cross, the bloody sword,  
Flashes athwart the Moslem's glazing eye,  
And mocks his trust in Allah who forsakes.  
Up to the church the Plaça gently slopes,  
In shape most like the pious palmer's shell,  
Girdled with low white houses; high above  
Tower the strong fortress and sharp-angled wall  
And well-flanked castle gate. From o'er the roofs,  
And from the shadowed pátios cool, there spreads  
The breath of flowers and aromatic leaves  
Soothing the sense with bliss indefinite, —  
A baseless hope, a glad presentiment,  
That curves the lip more softly, fills the eye  
With more indulgent beam. And so it soothes,  
So gently sways the pulses of the crowd  
Who make a zone about the central spot  
Chosen by Roldan for his theatre.  
Maids with arched eyebrows, delicate-pencilled,  
dark,  
Fold their round arms below the kerchief full;  
Men shoulder little girls; and grandames gray,



But muscular still, hold babies on their arms;  
 While mothers keep the stout-legged boys in front  
 Against their skirts, as old Greek pictures show  
 The Glorious Mother with the Boy divine.  
 Youths keep the places for themselves, and roll  
 Large lazy eyes, and call recumbent dogs  
 (For reasons deep below the reach of thought).  
 The old men cough with purpose, wish to hint  
 Wisdom within that cheapens jugglery,  
 Maintain a neutral air, and knit their brows  
 In observation. None are quarrelsome,  
 Noisy, or very merry; for their blood  
 Moves slowly into fervour, — they rejoice  
 Like those dark birds that sweep with heavy wing,  
 Cheering their mates with melancholy cries.

But now the gilded balls begin to play  
 In rhythmic numbers, ruled by practice fine  
 Of eye and muscle: all the juggler's form  
 Consents harmonious in swift-gliding change,  
 Easily forward stretched or backward bent  
 With lightest step and movement circular  
 Round a fixed point: 't is not the old Roldan  
 now,

The dull, hard, weary, miserable man,  
 The soul all parched to languid appetite  
 And memory of desire: 't is wondrous force  
 That moves in combination multiform  
 Towards conscious ends: 't is Roldan glorious  
 Holding all eyes like any meteor,  
 King of the moment save when Annibal  
 Divides the scene and plays the comic part,  
 Gazing with blinking glances up and down,  
 Dancing and throwing naught and catching it,  
 With mimicry as merry as the tasks  
 Of penance-working shades in Tartarus.



Pablo stands passive, and a space apart,  
Holding a viol, waiting for command.  
Music must not be wasted, but must rise  
As needed climax; and the audience  
Is growing with late comers. Juan now,  
And the familiar Host, with Blasco broad,  
Find way made gladly to the inmost round  
Studded with heads. Lorenzo knits the crowd  
Into one family by showing all  
Good-will and recognition. Juan casts  
His large and rapid-measuring glance around;  
But — with faint quivering, transient as a breath  
Shaking a flame — his eyes make sudden pause  
Where by the jutting angle of a street  
Castle-ward leading, stands a female form,  
A kerchief pale square-drooping o'er the brow,  
About her shoulders dim brown serge, — in garb  
Most like a peasant-woman from the vale,  
Who might have lingered after marketing  
To see the show. What thrill mysterious,  
Ray-borne from orb to orb of conscious eyes,  
The swift observing sweep of Juan's glance  
Arrests an instant, then with prompting fresh  
Diverts it lastingly? He turns at once  
To watch the gilded balls, and nod and smile  
At little round Pepíta, blondest maid  
In all Bedmár, — Pepíta, fair yet flecked,  
Saucy of lip and nose, of hair as red  
As breasts of robins stepping on the snow, —  
Who stands in front with little tapping feet,  
And baby-dimpled hands that hide enclosed  
Those sleeping crickets, the dark castanets.  
But soon the gilded balls have ceased to play,  
And Annibal is leaping through the hoops  
That turn to twelve, meeting him as he flies  
In the swift circle. Shuddering he leaps,

But with each spring flies swift and swifter still  
 To loud and louder shouts, while the great hoops  
 Are changed to smaller. Now the crowd is fired.  
 The motion swift, the living victim urged,  
 The imminent failure and repeated scape  
 Hurry all pulses and intoxicate  
 With subtle wine of passion many-mixt.  
 'T is all about a monkey leaping hard  
 Till near to gasping; but it serves as well  
 As the great circus or arena dire,  
 Where these are lacking. Roldan cautiously  
 Slackens the leaps and lays the hoops to rest,  
 And Annibal retires with reeling brain  
 And backward stagger, — pity, he could not  
 smile!

Now Roldan spreads his carpet, now he shows  
 Strange metamorphoses: the pebble black  
 Changes to whitest egg within his hand;  
 A staring rabbit, with retreating ears,  
 Is swallowed by the air and vanishes;  
 He tells men's thoughts about the shaken dice,  
 Their secret choosings; makes the white beans pass  
 With causeless act sublime from cup to cup  
 Turned empty on the ground, — diablerie  
 That pales the girls and puzzles all the boys:  
 These tricks are samples, hinting to the town  
 Roldan's great mastery. He tumbles next,  
 And Annibal is called to mock each feat  
 With arduous comicality and save  
 By rule romantic the great public mind  
 (And Roldan's body) from too serious strain.

But with the tumbling, lest the feats should fail,  
 And so need veiling in a haze of sound,  
 Pablo awakes the viol and the bow, —  
 The masculine bow that draws the woman's heart

From out the strings and makes them cry, yearn,  
    plead,  
Tremble, exult, with mystic union  
Of joy acute and tender suffering.  
To play the viol and discreetly mix  
Alternate with the bow's keen biting tones  
The throb responsive to the finger's touch,  
Was rarest skill that Pablo half had caught  
From an old blind and wandering Catalan;  
The other half was rather heritage  
From treasure stored by generations past  
In winding chambers of receptive sense.  
The wingéd sounds exalt the thick-pressed crowd  
With a new pulse in common, blending all  
The gazing life into one larger soul  
With dimly widened consciousness: as waves  
In heightened movement tell of waves far off.  
And the light changes; westward stationed clouds,  
The sun's ranged outposts, luminous message  
    spread,  
Rousing quiescent things to doff their shade  
And show themselves as added audience.  
Now Pablo, letting fall the eager bow,  
Solicits softer murmurs from the strings,  
And now above them pours a wondrous voice  
(Such as Greek reapers heard in Sicily)  
With wounding rapture in it, like love's arrows;  
And clear upon clear air as coloured gems  
Dropped in a crystal cup of water pure,  
Fall words of sadness, simple, lyrical:

*Spring comes hither,  
    Buds the rose;  
Roses wither,  
    Sweet spring goes.  
Ojalá, would she carry me!*

*Summer soars, —  
Wide-winged day  
White light pours,  
Flies away.  
Ojalá, would he carry me!*

*Soft winds blow,  
Westward born,  
Onward go  
Toward the morn.  
Ojalá, would they carry me!*

*Sweet birds sing  
O'er the graves,  
Then take wing  
O'er the waves.  
Ojalá, would they carry me!*

When the voice paused and left the viol's note  
To plead forsaken, 't was as when a cloud,  
Hiding the sun, makes all the leaves and flowers  
Shiver. But when with measured change the  
strings

Had taught regret new longing, clear again,  
Welcome as hope recovered, flowed the voice.

*Warm whispering through the slender olive leaves*

*Came to me a gentle sound,*

*Whispering of a secret found*

*In the clear sunshine 'mid the golden sheaves:*

*Said it was sleeping for me in the morn,*

*Called it gladness, called it joy,*

*Drew me on — "Come hither, boy" —*

*To where the blue wings rested on the corn.*

*I thought the gentle sound had whispered true, —*

*Thought the little heaven mine,*

*Leaned to clutch the thing divine,*

*And saw the blue wings melt within the blue.*



The long notes linger on the trembling air,  
 With subtle penetration enter all  
 The myriad corridors of the passionate soul,  
 Message-like spread, and answering action rouse.  
 Not angular jigs that warm the chilly limbs  
 In hoary northern mists, but action curved  
 To soft andante strains pitched plaintively.  
 Vibrations sympathetic stir all limbs:  
 Old men live backward in their dancing prime,  
 And move in memory; small legs and arms  
 With pleasant agitation purposeless  
 Go up and down like pretty fruits in gales.  
 All long in common for the expressive act  
 Yet wait for it; as in the olden time  
 Men waited for the bard to tell their thought.  
 "The dance! the dance!" is shouted all around.  
 Now Pablo lifts the bow, Pepita now,  
 Ready as bird that sees the sprinkled corn,  
 When Juan nods and smiles, puts forth her  
     foot  
 And lifts her arm to wake the castanets.  
 Juan advances, too, from out the ring  
 And bends to quit his lute; for now the scene  
 Is empty; Roldan, weary, gathers pence,  
 Followed by Annibal with purse and stick.  
 The carpet lies a coloured isle untrod,  
 Inviting feet: "The dance, the dance," resounds,  
 The bow entreats with slow melodic strain,  
 And all the air with expectation yearns.

Sudden, with gliding motion like a flame  
 That through dim vapour makes a path of glory,  
 A figure lithe, all white and saffron-robed,  
 Flashed right across the circle, and now stood  
 With ripened arms uplift and regal head,  
 Like some tall flower whose dark and intense heart



Lies half within a tulip-tinted cup.  
 Juan stood fixed and pale; Pepíta stepped  
 Backward within the ring: the voices fell  
 From shouts insistent to more passive tones  
 Half meaning welcome, half astonishment.  
 "Lady Fedalma! — will she dance for us?"

But she, sole swayed by impulse passionate,  
 Feeling all life was music and all eyes  
 The warming, quickening light that music makes,  
 Moved as, in dance religious, Miriam,  
 When on the Red Sea shore she raised her voice,  
 And led the chorus of her people's joy;  
 Or as the Trojan maids that reverent sang  
 Watching the sorrow-crownéd Hecuba:  
 Moved in slow curves voluminous, gradual,  
 Feeling and action flowing into one,  
 In Eden's natural taintless marriage-bond;  
 Ardently modest, sensuously pure,  
 With young delight that wonders at itself  
 And throbs as innocent as opening flowers,  
 Knowing not comment, — soilless, beautiful.  
 The spirit in her gravely glowing face  
 With sweet community informs her limbs,  
 Filling their fine gradation with the breath  
 Of virgin majesty; as full vowelled words  
 Are new impregnate with the master's thought.  
 Even the chance-strayed delicate tendrils black,  
 That backward 'scape from out her wreathing  
 hair, —

Even the pliant folds that cling transverse  
 When with obliquely soaring bend altern  
 She seems a goddess quitting earth again —  
 Gather expression — a soft undertone  
 And resonance exquisite from the grand chord  
 Of her harmoniously bodied soul.

At first a reverential silence guards  
 The eager senses of the gazing crowd:  
 They hold their breath, and live by seeing her.  
 But soon the admiring tension finds relief, —  
 Sighs of delight, applausive murmurs low,  
 And stirrings gentle as of eared corn  
 Or seed-bent grasses, when the ocean's breath  
 Spreads landward. Even Juan is impelled  
 By the swift-travelling movement: fear and doubt  
 Give way before the hurrying energy;  
 He takes his lute and strikes in fellowship,  
 Filling more full the rill of melody  
 Raised ever and anon to clearest flood  
 By Pablo's voice, that dies away too soon,  
 Like the sweet blackbird's fragmentary chant,  
 Yet wakes again, with varying rise and fall,  
 In songs that seem emergent memories  
 Prompting brief utterance, — little *cançons*  
 And *villancicos*, Andalusia-born.

PABLO (*sings*)

*It was in the prime  
 Of the sweet Spring-time.  
 In the linnet's throat  
 Trembled the love-note,  
 And the love-stirred air  
 Thrilled the blossoms there.  
 Little shadows danced  
 Each a tiny elf,  
 Happy in large light  
 And the thinnest self.*

*It was but a minute  
 In a far-off Spring,  
 But each gentle thing,  
 Sweetly-wooing linnet,*

*Soft-thrilled hawthorn-tree,  
 Happy shadowy elf  
 With the thinnest self,  
 Live still on in me.  
 Oh, the sweet, sweet prime  
 Of the past Spring-time!*

-And still the light is changing: high above  
 Float soft pink clouds; others with deeper flush  
 Stretch like flamingoes bending toward the south.  
 Comes a more solemn brilliance o'er the sky,  
 A meaning more intense upon the air, —  
 The inspiration of the dying day.  
 And Juan now, when Pablo's notes subside,  
 Soothes the regretful ear, and breaks the pause  
 With masculine voice in deep antiphony.

JUAN (*sings*)

*Day is dying! Float, O song,  
 Down the westward river,  
 Requiem chanting to the Day, —  
 Day, the mighty Giver.*

*Pierced by shafts of Time he bleeds  
 Melted rubies sending  
 Through the river and the sky,  
 Earth and heaven blending;*

*All the long-drawn earthly banks  
 Up to cloud-land lifting:  
 Slow between them drifts the swan,  
 'Twiixt two heavens drifting.*

*Wings half open, like a flow'r  
 Inly deeper flushing,  
 Neck and breast as virgin's pure, —  
 Virgin proudly blushing.*

*Day is dying! Float, O swan,  
Down the ruby river;  
Follow, song, in requiem  
To the mighty Giver.*

The exquisite hour, the ardour of the crowd,  
The strains more plenteous, and the gathering  
night

Of action passionate where no effort is,  
But self's poor gates open to rushing power  
That blends the inward ebb and outward vast, —  
All gathering influences culminate  
And urge Fedalma. Earth and heaven seem one,  
Life a glad trembling on the outer edge  
Of unknown rapture. Swifter now she moves,  
Filling the measure with a double beat  
And widening circle; now she seems to glow  
With more declaréd presence, glorified.  
Circling, she lightly bends and lifts on high  
The multitudinous-sounding tambourine,  
And makes it ring and boom, then lifts it higher  
Stretching her left arm beauteous; now the crowd  
Exultant shouts, forgetting poverty  
In the rich moment of possessing her.

But sudden, at one point, the exultant throng  
Is pushed and hustled, and then thrust apart:  
Something approaches, — something cuts the ring  
Of jubilant idlers, — startling as a streak  
From alien wounds across the blooming flesh  
Of careless sporting childhood. 'T is the band  
Of Gypsy prisoners. Soldiers lead the van  
And make sparse flanking guard, aloof surveyed  
By gallant Lopez, stringent in command.  
The Gypsies chained in couples, all save one,  
Walk in dark file with grand bare legs and arms



And savage melancholy in their eyes  
 That star-like gleam from out black clouds of hair:  
 Now they are full in sight, and now they stretch  
 Right to the centre of the open space.  
 Fedalma now, with gentle wheeling sweep  
 Returning, like the loveliest of the Hours  
 Strayed from her sisters, truant lingering,  
 Faces again the centre, swings again  
 The uplifted tambourine . . .

When lo! with sound

Stupendous throbbing, solemn as a voice  
 Sent by the invisible choir of all the dead,  
 -Tolls the great passing bell that calls to prayer  
 For souls departed: at the mighty beat  
 It seems the light sinks awe-struck, — 't is the note  
 Of the sun's burial; speech and action pause;  
 Religious silence and the holy sign  
 Of everlasting memories (the sign  
 Of death that turned to more diffusive life)  
 Pass o'er the Praça. Little children gaze  
 With lips apart, and feel the unknown god;  
 And the most men and women pray. Not all.  
 The soldiers pray; the Gypsies stand unmoved  
 As pagan statues with proud level gaze.  
 -But he who wears a solitary chain  
 Heading the file, has turned to face Fedalma.  
 She motionless, with arm uplifted, guards  
 The tambourine aloft (lest, sudden-lowered,  
 Its trivial jingle mar the duteous pause),  
 -Reveres the general prayer, but prays not, stands  
 With level glance meeting that Gypsy's eyes,  
 That seem to her the sadness of the world  
 -Rebuking her, the great bell's hidden thought  
 Now first unveiled, — the sorrows unredeemed  
 Of races outcast, scorned, and wandering.  
 Why does he look at her? why she at him?



As if the meeting light between their eyes  
Made permanent union? His deep-knit brow,  
Inflated nostril, scornful lip compressed,  
Seem a dark hieroglyph of coming fate  
Written before her. Father Isidor  
Had terrible eyes, and was her enemy;  
She knew it and defied him; all her soul  
Rounded and hardened in its separateness  
When they encountered. But this prisoner, —  
This Gypsy, passing, gazing casually, —  
Was he her enemy too? She stood all quelled,  
The impetuous joy that hurried in her veins  
Seemed backward rushing turned to chilliest awe,  
Uneasy wonder, and a vague self-doubt.  
The minute brief stretched measureless, dream-  
filled  
By a dilated new-fraught consciousness.

Now it was gone; the pious murmur ceased,  
The Gypsies all moved onward at command  
And careless noises blent confusedly.  
But the ring closed again, and many ears  
Waited for Pablo's music, many eyes  
Turned towards the carpet: it lay bare and dim,  
Twilight was there, — the bright Fedalma gone.

*A handsome room in the Castle. On a table a rich  
jewel-casket.*

Silva had dropped his mail and with it all  
The heavier harness of his warlike cares.  
He had not seen Fedalma; miser-like  
He hoarded through the hour a costlier joy  
By longing oft-repressed. Now it was earned;  
And with observance wanted he would send  
To ask admission. Spanish gentlemen  
Who wooed fair dames of noble ancestry

Did homage with rich tunics and slashed sleeves  
 And outward-surgings linen's costly snow;  
 With broidered scarf transverse, and rosary  
 Handsomely wrought to fit high-blooded prayer;  
 So hinting in how deep respect they held  
 That self they threw before their lady's feet.  
 And Silva — that Fedalma's rate should stand  
 No jot below the highest, that her love  
 Might seem to all the royal gift it was —  
 Turned every trifle in his mien and garb  
 To scrupulous language, uttering to the world  
 That since she loved him he went carefully,  
 Bearing a thing so precious in his hand.  
 A man of high-wrought strain, fastidious  
 In his acceptance, dreading all delight  
 That speedy dies and turns to carrion:  
 His senses much exacting, deep instilled  
 With keen imagination's difficult needs; —  
 Like strong-limbed monsters studded o'er with  
     eyes,  
 Their hunger checked by overwhelming vision,  
 Or that fierce lion in symbolic dream  
 Snatched from the ground by wings and new-  
     endowed  
 With a man's thought-propelled relenting heart.  
 Silva was both the lion and the man;  
 First hesitating shrank, then fiercely sprang,  
 Or having sprung, turned pallid at his deed  
 And loosed the prize, paying his blood for naught.  
 A nature half-transformed, with qualities  
 That oft bewrayed each other, elements  
 Not blent but struggling, breeding strange effects,  
 Passing the reckoning of his friends or foes.  
 Haughty and generous, grave and passionate;  
 With tidal moments of devoutest awe,  
 Sinking anon to furthest ebb of doubt;

Deliberating ever, till the sting  
Of a recurrent ardour made him rush  
Right against reasons that himself had drilled  
And marshalled painfully. A spirit framed  
Too proudly special for obedience,  
Too subtly pondering for mastery:  
Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,  
Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,  
Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness  
And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.  
But look less curiously: life itself  
May not express us all, may leave the worst  
And the best too, like tunes in mechanism  
Never awaked. In various catalogues  
Objects stand variously. Silva stands  
As a young Spaniard, handsome, noble, brave,  
With titles many, high in pedigree;  
Or, as a nature quiveringly poised  
In reach of storms, whose qualities may turn  
To murdered virtues that still walk as ghosts  
Within the shuddering soul and shriek remorse;  
Or, as a lover . . . In the screening time  
Of purple blossoms when the petals crowd  
And softly crush like cherub cheeks in heaven,  
Who thinks of greenly withered fruit and worms?  
Oh the warm southern spring is beauteous!  
And in love's spring all good seems possible:  
No threats, all promise, brooklets ripple full  
And bathe the rushes, vicious crawling things  
Are pretty eggs, the sun shines graciously  
And parches not, the silent rain beats warm  
As childhood's kisses, days are young and grow,  
And earth seems in its sweet beginning time  
Fresh made for two who live in Paradise.  
Silva is in love's spring, its freshness breathed  
Within his soul along the dusty ways

While marching homeward; 't is around him now  
 As in a garden fenced in for delight, —  
 And he may seek delight. Smiling he lifts  
 A whistle from his belt, but lets it fall  
 Ere it has reached his lips, jarred by the sound  
 Of ushers' knocking, and a voice that craves  
 Admission for the Prior of San Domingo.

PRIOR (*entering*)

You look perturbed, my son. I thrust myself  
 Between you and some beckoning intent  
 That wears a face more smiling than my own.

DON SILVA

Father, enough that you are here. I wait,  
 As always, your commands, — nay, should have  
     sought  
 An early audience.

PRIOR

To give, I trust,  
 Good reasons for your change of policy?

DON SILVA

Strong reasons, father.

PRIOR

Ay, but are they good?  
 I have known reasons strong, but strongly evil.

DON SILVA

'T is possible. I but deliver mine  
 To your strict judgment. Late despatches sent  
 With urgency by the Count of Bavien,



No hint on my part prompting, with besides  
 The testified concurrence of the king  
 And our Grand Master, have made peremptory  
 The course which else had been but rational.  
 Without the forces furnished by allies  
 The siege of Guadix would be madness. More,  
 El Zagal has his eyes upon Bedmár:  
 Let him attempt it: in three weeks from hence  
 The Master and the Lord of Aguilar  
 Will bring their forces. We shall catch the Moors,  
 The last gleaned clusters of their bravest men,  
 As in a trap. You have my reasons, father.

## PRIOR

And they sound well. But free-tongued rumour  
 adds  
 A pregnant supplement, — in substance this:  
 That inclination snatches arguments  
 To make indulgence seem judicious choice;  
 That you, commanding in God's Holy War,  
 Lift prayers to Satan to retard the fight  
 And give you time for feasting, — wait a siege,  
 Call daring enterprise impossible,  
 Because you 'd marry! You, a Spanish duke,  
 Christ's general, would marry like a clown,  
 Who, selling fodder dearer for the war,  
 Is all the merrier; nay, like the brutes,  
 Who know no awe to check their appetite,  
 Coupling 'mid heaps of slain, while still in front  
 The battle rages.

## DON SILVA

Rumour on your lips  
 Is eloquent, father.



PRIOR

Is she true?

DON SILVA

Perhaps.

I seek to justify my public acts  
 And not my private joy. Before the world  
 Enough if I am faithful in command,  
 Betray not by my deeds, swerve from no task  
 My knightly vows constrain me to: herein  
 I ask all men to test me.

PRIOR

Knightly vows?

Is it by their constraint that you must marry?

DON SILVA

-Marriage is not a breach of them. I use  
 A sanctioned liberty . . . your pardon, father,  
 I need not teach you what the Church decrees.  
 But facts may weaken texts, and so dry up  
 The fount of eloquence. The Church relaxed  
 Our Order's rule before I took the vows.

PRIOR

Ignoble liberty! you snatch your rule  
 From what God tolerates, not what he loves? —  
 Inquire what lowest offering may suffice,  
 Cheapen it meanly to an obolus,  
 Buy, and then count the coin left in your purse  
 For your debauch? — Measure obedience  
 By scantest powers of feeble brethren  
 Whom Holy Church indulges? — Ask great Law,  
 The rightful Sovereign of the human soul,

For what it pardons, not what it commands?  
Oh fallen knighthood, penitent of high vows,  
Asking a charter to degrade itself!  
Such poor apology of rules relaxed  
Blunts not suspicion of that doubleness  
Your enemies tax you with.

DON SILVA

Oh, for the rest,  
Conscience is harder than our enemies,  
Knows more, accuses with more nicety,  
Nor needs to question Rumour if we fall  
Below the perfect model of our thought.  
I fear no outward arbiter. — You smile?

PRIOR

Ay, at the contrast 'twixt your portraiture  
And the true image of your conscience, shown  
As now I see it in your acts. I see  
A drunken sentinel who gives alarm  
At his own shadow, but when scalers snatch  
His weapon from his hand smiles idiot-like  
At games he's dreaming of.

DON SILVA

A parable!  
The husk is rough, — holds something bitter,  
doubtless.

PRIOR

Oh, the husk gapes with meaning over-ripe.  
You boast a conscience that controls your deeds,  
Watches your knightly armour, guards your rank  
From stain of treachery, — you, helpless slave,

78 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Whose will lies nerveless in the clutch of lust, —  
Of blind mad passion, — passion itself most helpless,  
Storm-driven, like the monsters of the sea.  
Oh famous conscience!

DON SILVA

Pause there! Leave unsaid  
Aught that will match that text. More were too  
much,  
Even from holy lips. I own no love  
But such as guards my honour, since it guards  
Hers whom I love! I suffer no foul words  
To stain the gift I lay before her feet;  
And, being hers, my honour is more safe.

PRIOR

Verse-makers' talk! fit for a world of rhymes,  
Where facts are feigned to tickle idle ears,  
Where good and evil play at tournament  
And end in amity, — a world of lies, —  
A carnival of words where every year  
Stale falsehoods serve fresh men. Your honour  
safe?  
What honour has a man with double bonds?  
Honour is shifting as the shadows are  
To souls that turn their passions into laws.  
A Christian knight who weds an infidel . . .

DON SILVA (*fiercely*)

An infidel!

PRIOR

May one day spurn the Cross,  
And call that honour! — one day find his sword

Stained with his brother's blood, and call that  
honour!

Apostates' honour? — harlots' chastity!  
Renegades' faithfulness? — Iscariot's!

DON SILVA

Strong words and burning; but they scorch not me.  
Fedalma is a daughter of the Church, —  
Has been baptized and nurtured in the faith.

PRIOR

-Ay, as a thousand Jewesses, who yet  
Are brides of Satan in a robe of flames.

DON SILVA

Fedalma is no Jewess, bears no marks  
That tell of Hebrew blood.

PRIOR

She bears the marks  
Of races unbaptized, that never bowed  
Before the holy signs, were never moved  
By stirrings of the sacramental gifts.

DON SILVA (*scornfully*)

Holy accusers practise palmistry,  
And, other witness lacking, read the skin.

PRIOR

I read a record deeper than the skin.  
What! Shall the trick of nostrils and of lips  
Descend through generations, and the soul  
That moves within our frame like God in worlds —

Convulsing, urging, melting, withering —  
 Imprint no record, leave no documents,  
 Of her great history? Shall men bequeath  
 The fancies of their palate to their sons,  
 And shall the shudder of restraining awe,  
 The slow-wept tears of contrite memory,  
 Faith's prayerful labour, and the food divine  
 Of fasts ecstatic, — shall these pass away  
 Like wind upon the waters, tracklessly?  
 Shall the mere curl of eyelashes remain  
 And god-enshrining symbols leave no trace  
 Of tremors reverent? — That maiden's blood  
 Is as unchristian as the leopard's.

DON SILVA

Say,  
 Unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's blood  
 Before the angel spoke the word, "All hail!"

PRIOR (*smiling bitterly*)

Say I not truly? See, your passion weaves  
 Already blasphemies!

DON SILVA

'T is you provoke them.

PRIOR

I strive, as still the Holy Spirit strives,  
 To move the will perverse. But, failing this,  
 God commands other means to save our blood,  
 To save Castilian glory, — nay, to save  
 The name of Christ from blot of traitorous deeds.



## DON SILVA

Of traitorous deeds! Age, kindred, and your cowl  
Give an ignoble license to your tongue.  
As for your threats, fulfil them at your peril.  
'T is you, not I, will gibbet our great name  
To rot in infamy. If I am strong  
In patience now, trust me, I can be strong  
Then in defiance.

## PRIOR

Miserable man!

Your strength will turn to anguish, like the strength  
Of fallen angels. Can you change your blood?  
You are a Christian, with the Christian awe  
In every vein. A Spanish noble, born  
To serve your people and your people's faith.  
Strong, are you? Turn your back upon the  
Cross, —

Its shadow is before you. Leave your place:  
Quit the great ranks of knighthood: you will walk  
Forever with a tortured double self,  
A self that will be hungry while you feast,  
Will blush with shame while you are glorified,  
Will feel the ache and chill of desolation,  
Even in the very bosom of your love.  
Mate yourself with this woman, fit for what?  
To make the sport of Moorish palaces  
A lewd Herodias . . .

## DON SILVA

Stop! no other man,  
Priest though he were, had had his throat left free  
For passage of those words. I would have clutched  
His serpent's neck, and flung him out to hell!  
A monk must needs defile the name of love:

He knows it but as tempting devils paint it.  
 You think to scare my love from its resolve  
 With arbitrary consequences, strained  
 By rancorous effort from the thinnest notes  
 Of possibility? — cite hideous lists  
 Of sins irrelevant, to frighten me  
 With bugbears' names, as women fright a child?  
 Poor pallid wisdom, taught by inference  
 From blood-drained life, where phantom terrors  
     rule,  
 And all achievement is to leave undone!  
 Paint the day dark, make sunshine cold to me,  
 Abolish the earth's fairness, prove it all  
 A fiction of my eyes, — then, after that,  
 Profane Fedalma.

## PRIOR

Oh, there is no need:  
 She has profaned herself. Go, raving man,  
 And see her dancing now. Go, see your bride  
 Flaunting her beauties grossly in the gaze  
 Of vulgar idlers, — eking out the show  
 Made in the Praça by a mountebank.  
 I hinder you no further.

## DON SILVA

It is false!

## PRIOR

Go, prove it false, then.

  [Father Isidor  
 Drew on his cowl and turned away. The face  
 That flashed anathemas, in swift eclipse  
 Seemed Silva's vanished confidence. In haste

He rushed unsignalled through the corridor  
 To where the Duchess once, Fedalma now,  
 Had residence retired from din of arms, —  
 Knocked, opened, found all empty, — said  
 With muffled voice, “Fedalma!” — called more  
 loud,

More oft on Iñez, the old trusted nurse, —  
 Then searched the terrace-garden, calling still,  
 But heard no answering sound, and saw no face  
 Save painted faces staring all unmoved  
 By agitated tones. He hurried back,  
 Giving half-conscious orders as he went  
 To page and usher, that they straight should seek  
 Lady Fedalma; then with stinging shame  
 Wished himself silent; reached again the room  
 Where still the Father’s menace seemed to hang  
 Thickening the air; snatched cloak and pluméd  
 hat,

And grasped, not knowing why, his poniard’s hilt;  
 Then checked himself and said: —]

If he spoke truth!

To know were wound enough, — to see the truth  
 Were fire upon the wound. It must be false!  
 His hatred saw amiss, or snatched mistake  
 In other men’s report. I am a fool!  
 But where can she be gone? gone secretly?  
 And in my absence? Oh, she meant no wrong!  
 I am a fool! — But where can she be gone?  
 With only Iñez? Oh, she meant no wrong!  
 I swear she never meant it. There’s no wrong  
 But she would make it momentary right  
 By innocence in doing it. . . .

And yet,  
 What is our certainty? Why, knowing all  
 That is not secret. Mighty confidence!

One pulse of Time makes the base hollow, — sends  
 The towering certainty we built so high  
 Toppling in fragments meaningless. What is —  
 What will be — must be — pooh! they wait the key  
 Of that which is not yet; all other keys  
 Are made of our conjectures, take their sense  
 From humours fooled by hope, or by despair.  
 Know what is good? Oh God, we know not yet  
 If bliss itself is not young misery  
 With fangs swift growing. . . .

But some outward harm  
 May even now be hurting, grieving her.  
 Oh, I must search, — face shame, — if shame be  
 there.

Here, Perez! hasten to Don Alvar, — tell him  
 Lady Fedalma must be sought, — is lost, —  
 Has met, I fear, some mischance. He must send  
 Towards divers points. I go myself to seek  
 First in the town. . . .

[As Perez oped the door,  
 Then moved aside for passage of the Duke,  
 Fedalma entered, cast away the cloud  
 Of serge and linen, and, outbeaming bright,  
 Advanced a pace towards Silva, — but then paused,  
 For he had started and retreated; she,  
 Quick and responsive as the subtle air  
 To change in him, divined that she must wait  
 Until they were alone: they stood and looked.  
 Within the Duke was struggling confluence  
 Of feelings manifold, — pride, anger, dread,  
 Meeting in stormy rush with sense secure  
 That she was present, with the satisfied thirst  
 Of gazing love, with trust inevitable  
 As in beneficent virtues of the light  
 And all earth's sweetness, that Fedalma's soul

Was free from blemishing purpose. Yet proud  
wrath

Leaped in dark flood above the purer stream  
That strove to drown it: Anger seeks its prey, —  
Something to tear with sharp-edged tooth and  
claw,

Likes not to go off hungry, leaving Love  
To feast on milk and honeycomb at will.

Silva's heart said, he must be happy soon,  
She being there; but to be happy, — first  
He must be angry, having cause. Yet love  
Shot like a stifled cry of tenderness

All through the harshness he would fain have  
given

To the dear word,]

DON SILVA

Fedalma!

FEDALMA

O my Lord!

You are come back, and I was wandering!

DON SILVA (*coldly, but with suppressed agitation*)

You meant I should be ignorant.

FEDALMA

Oh no,

I should have told you after, — not before,  
Lest you should hinder me.

DON SILVA

Then my known wish

Can make no hindrance?



FEDALMA (*archly*)

That depends  
 On what the wish may be. You wished me once  
 Not to uncage the birds. I meant to obey:  
 But in a moment something — something stronger  
 Forced me to let them out. It did no harm.  
 They all came back again, — the silly birds!  
 I told you, after.

DON SILVA (*with haughty coldness*)

Will you tell me now  
 What was the prompting stronger than my wish  
 That made you wander?

FEDALMA (*advancing a step towards him, with  
 a sudden look of anxiety*)

Are you angry?

DON SILVA (*smiling bitterly*)

Angry?  
 A man deep-wounded may feel too much pain  
 To feel much anger.

FEDALMA (*still more anxiously*)

You — deep-wounded?

DON SILVA

Yes!

Have I not made your place and dignity  
 The very heart of my ambition? You, —  
 No enemy could do it, — you alone  
 Can strike it mortally.

## FEDALMA

Nay, Silva, nay.

Has some one told you false? I only went  
To see the world with Iñez, — see the town,  
The people, everything. It was no harm.  
I did not mean to dance: it happened so  
At last . . .

## DON SILVA

O God, it's true, then! — true that you,  
A maiden nurtured as rare flowers are,  
The very air of heaven sifted fine  
Lest any mote should mar your purity,  
Have flung yourself out on the dusty way  
For common eyes to see your beauty soiled!  
You own it true, — you danced upon the Praça?

FEDALMA (*proudly*)

Yes, it is true. I was not wrong to dance.  
The air was filled with music, with a song  
That seemed the voice of the sweet eventide, —  
The glowing light entering through eye and ear, —  
That seemed our love, — mine, yours, — they are  
but one, —  
Trembling through all my limbs, as fervent words  
Tremble within my soul and must be spoken.  
And all the people felt a common joy  
And shouted for the dance. A brightness soft  
As of the angels moving down to see  
Illumined the broad space. The joy, the life  
Around, within me, were one heaven: I longed  
To blend them visibly: I longed to dance  
Before the people, — be as mounting flame  
To all that burned within them! Nay, I danced;

There was no longing: I but did the deed  
Being moved to do it.

*(As FEDALMA speaks, she and DON SILVA are  
gradually drawn nearer to each other.)*

Oh, I seemed new-waked  
To life in unison with a multitude, —  
Feeling my soul upborne by all their souls,  
Floating within their gladness! Soon I lost  
All sense of separateness: Fedalma died  
As a star dies, and melts into the light.  
I was not, but joy was, and love and triumph.  
Nay, my dear lord, I never could do aught  
But I must feel you present. And once done,  
Why, you must love it better than your wish.  
I pray you, say so, — say, it was not wrong!

*(While FEDALMA has been making this  
last appeal, they have gradually come  
close together, and at last embrace.)*

DON SILVA (*holding her hands*)

Dangerous rebel! if the world without  
Were pure as that within . . . but 't is a book  
Wherein you only read the poesy  
And miss all wicked meanings. Hence the need  
For trust — obedience — call it what you will —  
Towards him whose life will be your guard, —  
towards me  
Who now am soon to be your husband.

FEDALMA

Yes!

That very thing that when I am your wife  
I shall be something different, — shall be  
I know not what, a duchess with new thoughts, —

For nobles never think like common men,  
 Nor wives like maidens (oh, you wot not yet  
 How much I note, with all my ignorance), —  
 That very thing has made me more resolve  
 To have my will before I am your wife.  
 How can the Duchess ever satisfy  
 Fedalma's unwed eyes? and so to-day  
 I scolded Iñez till she cried and went.

## DON SILVA

It was a guilty weakness: she knows well  
 That since you pleaded to be left more free  
 From tedious tendance and control of dames  
 Whose rank matched better with your destiny,  
 Her charge — my trust — was weightier.

## FEDALMA

Nay, my lord,

You must not blame her, dear old nurse. She cried.  
 Why, you would have consented too, at last.  
 I said such things! I was resolved to go,  
 And see the streets, the shops, the men at work,  
 The women, little children, — everything,  
 Just as it is when nobody looks on.  
 And I have done it! We were out four hours.  
 I feel so wise.

## DON SILVA

Had you but seen the town,  
 You innocent naughtiness, not shown yourself, —  
 Shown yourself dancing, — you bewilder me! —  
 Frustrate my judgment with strange negatives  
 That seem like poverty, and yet are wealth  
 In precious womanliness, beyond the dower  
 Of other women: wealth in virgin gold,

Outweighing all their petty currency.  
 You daring modesty! You shrink no more  
 From gazing men than from the gazing flowers  
 That, dreaming sunshine, open as you pass.

## FEDALMA

No, I should like the world to look at me  
 With eyes of love that make a second day.  
 I think your eyes would keep the life in me  
 Though I had naught to feed on else. Their blue  
 Is better than the heavens', — hold more love  
 For me, Fedalma, — is a little heaven  
 For this one little world that looks up now.

## DON SILVA

O precious little world! you make the heaven  
 As the earth makes the sky. But, dear, all eyes,  
 Though looking even on you, have not a glance  
 That cherishes . . .

## FEDALMA

Ah no, I meant to tell you, —  
 Tell how my dancing ended with a pang.  
 There came a man, one among many more,  
 But *he* came first, with iron on his limbs.  
 And when the bell tolled, and the people prayed,  
 And I stood pausing, — then he looked at me.  
 O Silva, such a man! I thought he rose  
 From the dark place of long-imprisoned souls,  
 To say that Christ had never come to them.  
 It was a look to shame a seraph's joy  
 And make him sad in heaven. It found me there, —  
 Seemed to have travelled far to find me there  
 And grasp me, — claim this festal life of mine  
 As heritage of sorrow, chill my blood



With the cold iron of some unknown bonds.  
The gladness hurrying full within my veins  
Was sudden frozen, and I danced no more.  
But seeing you let loose the stream of joy,  
Mingling the present with the sweetest past.  
Yet, Silva, still I see him. Who is he?  
Who are those prisoners with him? Are they  
Moors?

## DON SILVA

No, they are Gypsies, strong and cunning knaves,  
A double gain to us by the Moors' loss:  
The man you mean — their chief — is an ally  
The infidel will miss. His look might chase  
A herd of monks, and make them fly more swift  
Than from St. Jerome's lion. Such vague fear,  
Such bird-like tremors when that savage glance  
Turned full upon you in your height of joy  
Was natural, was not worth emphasis.  
Forget it, dear. This hour is worth whole days  
When we are sundered. Danger urges us  
To quick resolve.

## FEDALMA

What danger? What resolve?  
I never felt chill shadow in my heart  
Until this sunset.

## DON SILVA

A dark enmity  
Plots how to sever us. And our defence  
Is speedy marriage, secretly achieved,  
Then publicly declared. Beseech you, dear,  
Grant me this confidence; do my will in this,  
Trusting the reasons why I overset

All my own airy building raised so high  
 Of bridal honours, marking when you step  
 From off your maiden throne to come to me  
 And bear the yoke of love. There is great need.  
 I hastened home, carrying this prayer to you  
 Within my heart. The bishop is my friend,  
 Furthers our marriage, holds in enmity —  
 Some whom we love not and who love not us.  
 By this night's moon our priest will be despatched  
 From Jaën. I shall march an escort strong  
 To meet him. Ere a second sun from this  
 Has risen — you consenting — we may wed.

FEDALMA

None knowing that we wed?

DON SILVA

Beforehand none  
 Save Iñez and Don Alvar. But the vows  
 Once safely binding us, my household all  
 Shall know you as their Duchess. No man then  
 Can aim a blow at you but through my breast,  
 And what stains you must stain our ancient name;  
 If any hate you I will take his hate  
 And wear it as a glove upon my helm;  
 Nay, God himself will never have the power  
 To strike you solely and leave me unhurt,  
 He having made us one. Now put the seal  
 Of your dear lips on that.

FEDALMA

A solemn kiss? —  
 Such as I gave you when you came that day  
 From Córdoba, when first we said we loved?  
 When you had left the ladies of the court

For thirst to see me; and you told me so;  
And then I seemed to know why I had lived.  
I never knew before. A kiss like that?

DON SILVA

Yes, yes, you face divine! When was our kiss  
Like any other?

FEDALMA

Nay, I cannot tell  
What other kisses are. But that one kiss  
Remains upon my lips. The angels, spirits,  
Creatures with finer sense, may see it there.  
And now another kiss that will not die,  
Saying, To-morrow I shall be your wife!

*(They kiss, and pause a moment, looking earnestly in each other's eyes. Then FEDALMA, breaking away from DON SILVA, stands at a little distance from him with a look of roguish delight.)*

Now I am glad I saw the town to-day  
Before I am a Duchess, — glad I gave  
This poor Fedalma all her wish. For once,  
Long years ago, I cried when Iñez said,  
“You are no more a little girl;” I grieved  
To part forever from that little girl  
And all her happy world so near the ground.  
It must be sad to outlive aught we love.  
So I shall grieve a little for these days  
Of poor unwed Fedalma. Oh, they are sweet,  
And none will come just like them. Perhaps the  
wind  
Wails so in winter for the summers dead,  
And all sad sounds are nature's funeral cries  
For what has been and is not. Are they, Silva?

*(She comes nearer to him again, and lays her hand on his arm, looking up at him with melancholy.)*

## DON SILVA

Why, dearest, you began in merriment,  
 And end as sadly as a widowed bird.  
 Some touch mysterious has new-tuned your soul  
 To melancholy sequence. You soared high  
 In that wild flight of rapture when you danced,  
 And now you droop. 'T is arbitrary grief.  
 Surfeit of happiness, that mourns for loss  
 Of unwed love, which does but die like seed  
 For fuller harvest of our tenderness.  
 We in our wedded life shall know no loss.  
 We shall new-date our years. What went before  
 Will be the time of promise, shadows, dreams;  
 But this, full revelation of great love.  
 For rivers blent take in a broader heaven,  
 And we shall blend our souls. Away with grief!  
 When this dear head shall wear the double crown  
 Of wife and Duchess, — spiritually crowned  
 With sworn espousal before God and man, —  
 Visibly crowned with jewels that bespeak  
 The chosen sharer of my heritage, —  
 My love will gather perfectness, as thoughts  
 That nourish us to magnanimity  
 Grow perfect with more perfect utterance,  
 Gathering full-shapen strength. And then these  
 gems,

*(DON SILVA draws FEDALMA towards the jewel-casket on the table, and opens it.)*

Helping the utterance of my soul's full choice,  
 Will be the words made richer by just use,  
 And have new meaning in their lustrousness.

You know these jewels; they are precious signs  
 Of long-transmitted honour, heightened still  
 By worthy wearing; and I give them you, —  
 Ask you to take them, — place our house's trust  
 In her sure keeping whom my heart has found  
 Worthiest, most beauteous. These rubies — see —  
 Were falsely placed if not upon your brow.

(FEDALMA, *while DON SILVA holds open the casket, bends over it, looking at the jewels with delight.*)

FEDALMA

Ah, I remember them. In childish days  
 I felt as if they were alive and breathed.  
 I used to sit with awe and look at them.  
 And now they will be mine! I'll put them on.  
 Help me, my lord, and you shall see me now  
 Somewhat as I shall look at Court with you,  
 That we may know if I shall bear them well.  
 I have a fear sometimes: I think your love  
 Has never paused within your eyes to look,  
 And only passes through them into mine.  
 But when the Court is looking, and the queen,  
 Your eyes will follow theirs. Oh, if you saw  
 That I was other than you wished, — 't were death!

DON SILVA (*taking up a jewel and placing it against her ear*)

Nay, let us try. Take out your ear-ring, sweet.  
 This ruby glows with longing for your ear.

FEDALMA (*taking out her ear-rings, and then lifting up the other jewels, one by one*).

Pray, fasten in the rubies.



(DON SILVA *begins to put in the ear-ring.*)

I was right!

These gems have life in them: their colours speak,  
 Say what words fail of. So do many things, —  
 The scent of jasmine, and the fountain's splash,  
 The moving shadows on the far-off hills,  
 The slanting moonlight and our clasping hands.  
 O Silva, there 's an ocean round our words  
 That overflows and drowns them. Do you know  
 Sometimes when we sit silent, and the air  
 Breathes gently on us from the orange-trees,  
 It seems that with the whisper of a word  
 Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart.  
 Is it not true?

DON SILVA

Yes, dearest, it is true.  
 Speech is but broken light upon the depth  
 Of the unspoken: even your loved words  
 Float in the larger meaning of your voice  
 As something dimmer.

(*He is still trying in vain to fasten the second  
 ear-ring, while she has stooped again over  
 the casket.*)

FEDALMA (*raising her head*)

Ah! your lordly hands  
 Will never fix that jewel. Let me try.  
 Women's small finger-tips have eyes.

DON SILVA

No, no!

I like the task, only you must be still.

*(She stands perfectly still, clasping her hands together while he fastens the second ear-ring. Suddenly a clanking noise is heard without.)*

FEDALMA *(starting with an expression of pain)*

What is that sound? — that jarring cruel sound?  
'T is there, — outside.

*(She tries to start away towards the window but DON SILVA detains her.)*

DON SILVA

Oh heed it not, it comes  
From workmen in the outer gallery.

FEDALMA

It is the sound of fetters: sound of work  
Is not so dismal. Hark, they pass along!  
I know it is those Gypsy prisoners.  
I saw them, heard their chains. Oh horrible,  
To be in chains! Why, I with all my bliss  
Have longed sometimes to fly and be at large,  
Have felt imprisoned in my luxury  
With servants for my jailers. O my lord,  
Do you not wish the world were different?

DON SILVA

It will be different when this war has ceased.  
You, wedding me, will make it different,  
Making one life more perfect.

## FEDALMA

That is true!  
 And I shall beg much kindness at your hands  
 For those who are less happy than ourselves. —  
 (*Brightening.*) Oh, I shall rule you! ask for many  
 things

Before the world, which you will not deny  
 For very pride, lest men should say, "The Duke  
 Holds lightly by his Duchess; he repents  
 His humble choice."

*(She breaks away from him and returns to  
 the jewels, taking up a necklace, and clasp-  
 ing it on her neck, while he takes a circlet of  
 diamonds and rubies and raises it towards  
 her head as he speaks.)*

## DON SILVA

Doubtless, I shall persist  
 In loving you, to disappoint the world;  
 Out of pure obstinacy feel myself  
 Happiest of men. Now, take the coronet.

*(He places the circlet on her head.)*

The diamonds want more light. See, from this  
 lamp  
 I can set tapers burning.

## FEDALMA

Tell me, now,  
 When all these cruel wars are at an end,  
 And when we go to Court at Córdoba,  
 Or Seville, or Toledo, — wait awhile,  
 I must be farther off for you to see, —

*(She retreats to a distance from him, and then advances slowly.)*

Now think (I would the tapers gave more light!)  
 If when you show me at the tournaments  
 Among the other ladies, they will say,  
 "Duke Silva is well matched. His bride was  
 naught,  
 Was some poor foster-child, no man knows what;  
 Yet is her carriage noble, all her robes  
 Are worn with grace: she might have been well  
 born."  
 Will they say so? Think now we are at Court,  
 And all eyes bent on me.

#### DON SILVA

Fear not, my Duchess!  
 Some knight who loves may say his lady-love  
 Is fairer, being fairest. None can say  
 Don Silva's bride might better fit her rank.  
 You will make rank seem natural as kind,  
 As eagle's plumage or the lion's might.  
 A crown upon your brow would seem God-made.

#### FEDALMA

Then I am glad! I shall try on to-night  
 The other jewels, — have the tapers lit,  
 And see the diamonds sparkle.

*(She goes to the casket again.)*

Here is gold, —  
 A necklace of pure gold, — most finely wrought.

*(She takes out a large gold necklace and holds it up before her, then turns to DON SILVA.)*

But this is one that you have worn, my lord?

100 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

DON SILVA

No, love, I never wore it. Lay it down.

*(He puts the necklace gently out of her hand, then joins both her hands and holds them up between his own.)*

You must not look at jewels any more,  
But look at me.

FEDALMA (*looking up at him*)

O you dear heaven!

I should see naught if you were gone. 'T is true  
My mind is too much given to gauds, — to things  
That fetter thought within this narrow space.  
That comes of fear.

DON SILVA

What fear?

FEDALMA

Fear of myself.

For when I walk upon the battlements  
And see the river travelling toward the plain,  
The mountains screening all the world beyond,  
A longing comes that haunts me in my dreams, —  
Dreams where I seem to spring from off the walls,  
And fly far, far away, until at last  
I find myself alone among the rocks,  
Remember then that I have left you, — try  
To fly back to you, — and my wings are gone!

DON SILVA

A wicked dream! If ever I left you,  
Even in dreams, it was some demon dragged me,  
And with fierce struggles I awaked myself.



## FEDALMA

It is a hateful dream, and when it comes, —  
 I mean, when in my waking hours there comes  
 That longing to be free, I am afraid:  
 I run down to my chamber, plait my hair,  
 Weave colours in it, lay out all my gauds,  
 And in my mind make new ones prettier.  
 You see I have two minds, and both are foolish.  
 Sometimes a torrent rushing through my soul  
 Escapes in wild strange wishes; presently,  
 It dwindles to a little babbling rill  
 And plays among the pebbles and the flowers.  
 Ñeéz will have it I lack broidery,  
 Says naught else gives content to noble maids.  
 But I have never broidered, — never will.  
 No, when I am a Duchess and a wife  
 I shall ride forth — may I not? — by your side.

## DON SILVA

Yes, you shall ride upon a palfrey, black  
 To match Bavioca. Not Queen Isabel  
 Will be a sight more gladdening to men's eyes,  
 Than my dark queen Fedalma.

## FEDALMA

Ah, but you,  
 You are my king, and I shall tremble still  
 With some great fear that throbs within my love.  
 Does your love fear?

## DON SILVA

Ah, yes! all preciousness  
 To mortal hearts is guarded by a fear.  
 All love fears loss, and most that loss supreme.

102 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Its own perfection, — seeing, feeling change  
From high to lower, dearer to less dear.  
Can love be careless? If we lost our love  
What should we find? — with this sweet Past torn  
off,  
Our lives deep scarred just where their beauty lay?  
The best we found thenceforth were still a worse:  
The only better is a Past that lives  
On through an added Present, stretching still  
In hope unchecked by shaming memories  
To life's last breath. And so I tremble too  
Before my queen Fedalma.

FEDALMA

That is just.

'T were hard of Love to make us women fear  
And leave you bold. Yet Love is not quite even.  
For feeble creatures, little birds and fawns,  
Are shaken more by fear, while large strong things  
Can bear it stoutly. So we women still  
Are not well dealt with. Yet would I choose to be  
Fedalma loving Silva. You, my lord,  
Hold the worse share, since you must love poor me.  
But is it what we love, or how we love,  
That makes true good?

DON SILVA

O subtlety! for me  
'T is what I love determines how I love.  
The goddess with pure rites reveals herself  
And makes pure worship.

FEDALMA

Do you worship me?

DON SILVA

Ay, with that best of worship which adores  
Goodness adorable.

FEDALMA (*archly*)

Goodness obedient,  
Doing your will, devoutest worshipper?

DON SILVA

Yes, — listening to this prayer. This very night  
I shall go forth. And you will rise with day  
And wait for me?

FEDALMA

Yes.

DON SILVA

I shall surely come.  
And then we shall be married. Now I go  
To audience fixed in Abderahman's tower.  
Farewell, love! (*They embrace.*)

FEDALMA

Some chill dread possesses me!

DON SILVA

Oh, confidence has oft been evil augury,  
So dread may hold a promise. Sweet, farewell!  
I shall send tendance as I pass, to bear  
This casket to your chamber. — One more kiss.  
(*Exit.*)

FEDALMA (*when DON SILVA is gone, returning to the casket, and looking dreamily at the jewels*)

Yes, now that good seems less impossible!  
 Now it seems true that I shall be his wife,  
 Be ever by his side, and make a part  
 In all his purposes. . . .  
 These rubies greet me Duchess. How they glow!  
 Their prisoned souls are throbbing like my own.  
 Perchance they loved once, were ambitious, proud;  
 Or do they only dream of wider life,  
 Ache from intenseness, yearn to burst the wall  
 Compact of crystal splendour, and to flood  
 Some wider space with glory? Poor, poor gems!  
 We must be patient in our prison-house,  
 And find our space in loving. Pray you, love me.  
 Let us be glad together. And you, gold, —

*(She takes up the gold necklace.)*

You wondrous necklace, — will you love me too,  
 And be my amulet to keep me safe  
 From eyes that hurt?

*(She spreads out the necklace, meaning to clasp it on her neck. Then pauses, startled, holding it before her.)*

Why, it is magical!  
 He says he never wore it, — yet these lines, —  
 Nay, if he had, I should remember well  
 'T was he, no other. And these twisted lines, —  
 They seem to speak to me as writing would,  
 To bring a message from the dead, dead past.  
 What is their secret? Are they characters?  
 I never learned them; yet they stir some sense  
 That once I dreamed, — I have forgotten what.  
 Or was it life? Perhaps I lived before

In some strange world where first my soul was  
 shaped,  
 And all this passionate love, and joy, and pain,  
 That come, I know not whence, and sway my  
 deeds,  
 Are dim yet mastering memories, blind yet strong,  
 That this world stirs within me; as this chain  
 Stirs some strange certainty of visions gone,  
 And all my mind is as an eye that stares  
 Into the darkness painfully.

*(While FEDALMA has been looking at the  
 necklace, JUAN has entered, and finding  
 himself unobserved by her, says at last,)*

Señora!

FEDALMA *starts, and gathering the necklace  
 together turns round.*—

O Juan, it is you!

JUAN

I met the Duke, —  
 Had waited long without, no matter why, —  
 And when he ordered one to wait on you  
 And carry forth a burden you would give,  
 I prayed for leave to be the servitor.  
 Don Silva owes me twenty granted wishes  
 That I have never tendered, lacking aught  
 That I could wish for and a Duke could grant;  
 But this one wish to serve you, weighs as much  
 As twenty other longings.

FEDALMA *(smiling)*

That sounds well.  
 You turn your speeches prettily as songs.  
 But I will not forget the many days



You have neglected me. Your pupil learns  
 But little from you now. Her studies flag.  
 The Duke says, "That is idle Juan's way:  
 Poets must rove, — are honey-sucking birds  
 And know not constancy." Said he quite true?

JUAN

O lady, constancy has kind and rank.  
 One man's is lordly, plump, and bravely clad,  
 Holds its head high, and tells the world its  
 name:  
 Another man's is beggared, must go bare,  
 And shiver through the world, the jest of all,  
 But that it puts the motley on, and plays  
 Itself the jester. But I see you hold  
 The Gypsy's necklace: it is quaintly wrought.

FEDALMA

The Gypsy's? Do you know its history?

JUAN

No further back than when I saw it taken  
 From off its wearer's neck, — the Gypsy chief's.

FEDALMA (*eagerly*)

What! he who paused, at tolling of the bell,  
 Before me in the Praça?

JUAN

Yes, I saw  
 His look fixed on you.

FEDALMA

Know you aught of him?

JUAN

Something and nothing, — as I know the sky,  
 Or some great story of the olden time  
 That hides a secret. I have oft talked with him.  
 He seems to say much, yet is but a wizard  
 Who draws down rain by sprinkling; throws me  
 out  
 Some pregnant text that urges comment; casts  
 A sharp-hooked question, baited with such skill  
 It needs must catch the answer.

FEDALMA

It is hard

That such a man should be a prisoner, —  
 Be chained to work.

JUAN

Oh, he is dangerous!

Granáda with this Zarcá for a king  
 Might still maim Christendom. He is of those  
 Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny  
 And make the prophets lie. A Gypsy, too,  
 Suckled by hunted beasts, whose mother-milk  
 Has filled his veins with hate.

FEDALMA

I thought his eyes

Spoke not of hatred, — seemed to say he bore  
 The pain of those who never could be saved.  
 What if the Gypsies are but savage beasts  
 And must be hunted? — let them be set free,  
 Have benefit of chase, or stand at bay  
 And fight for life and offspring. Prisoners!  
 Oh, they have made their fires beside the streams,

## 108 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Their walls have been the rocks, the pillared pines,  
Their roof the living sky that breathes with light:  
They may well hate a cage, like strong-winged  
birds,

Like me, who have no wings, but only wishes.  
I will beseech the Duke to set them free.

### JUAN

Pardon me, lady, if I seem to warn,  
Or try to play the sage. What if the Duke  
Loved not to hear of Gypsies? if their name  
Were poisoned for him once, being used amiss?  
I speak not as of fact. Our nimble souls  
Can spin an insubstantial universe  
Suiting our mood, and call it possible,  
Sooner than see one grain with eye exact  
And give strict record of it. Yet by chance  
Our fancies may be truth and make us seers.  
'T is a rare teeming world, so harvest-full,  
Even guessing ignorance may pluck some fruit.  
Note what I say no further than will stead  
The siege you lay. I would not seem to tell  
Aught that the Duke may think and yet withhold:  
It were a trespass in me.

### FEDALMA

Fear not, Juan.

Your words bring daylight with them when you  
speak.  
I understand your care. But I am brave, —  
Oh, and so cunning! — always I prevail.  
Now, honoured Troubadour, if you will be  
Your pupil's servant, bear this casket hence.

Nay, not the necklace: it is hard to place.  
Pray go before me; Iñez will be there.

(*Exit JUAN with the casket.*)

FEDALMA (*looking again at the necklace*)

It is *his* past clings to you, not my own.  
If we have each our angels, good and bad,  
Fates, separate from ourselves, who act for us  
When we are blind, or sleep, then this man's fate,  
Hovering about the thing he used to wear,  
Has laid its grasp on mine appealingly.  
Dangerous, is he? — well, a Spanish knight  
Would have his enemy strong, — defy, not bind  
him.

I can dare all things when my soul is moved  
By something hidden that possesses me.  
If Silva said this man must keep his chains  
I should find ways to free him, — disobey  
And free him as I did the birds. But no!  
As soon as we are wed, I'll put my prayer,  
And he will not deny me: he is good.  
Oh, I shall have much power as well as joy!  
Duchess Fedalma may do what she will.

*A Street by the Castle. JUAN leans against a parapet, in moonlight, and touches his lute half unconsciously. PEPÍTA stands on tiptoe watching him, and then advances till her shadow falls in front of him. He looks towards her. A piece of white drapery thrown over her head catches the moonlight.*

JUAN

Ha! my Pepíta! see how thin and long  
Your shadow is. 'T is so your ghost will be,  
When you are dead.

PEPÍTA (*crossing herself*)

Dead! — Oh the blessed saints!  
You would be glad, then, if Pepíta died?

JUAN

Glad! why? Dead maidens are not merry. Ghosts  
Are doleful company. I like you living.

PEPÍTA

I think you like me not. I wish you did.  
Sometimes you sing to me and make me dance.  
Another time you take no heed of me,  
Not though I kiss my hand to you and smile.  
But Andrés would be glad if I kissed *him*.

JUAN

My poor Pepíta, I am old.

PEPÍTA

No, no.

You have no wrinkles.

JUAN

Yes, I have — within;  
The wrinkles are within, my little bird.  
Why, I have lived through twice a thousand years,  
And kept the company of men whose bones  
Crumbled before the blessed Virgin lived.

PEPÍTA (*crossing herself*)

Nay, God defend us, that is wicked talk!  
You say it but to scorn me. (*With a sob.*) I  
will go.



JUAN

Stay, little pigeon. I am not unkind.  
Come, sit upon the wall. Nay, never cry.  
Give me your cheek to kiss. There, cry no more!

(PEPÍTA, *sitting on the low parapet, puts up her cheek to JUAN, who kisses it, putting his hand under her chin. She takes his hand and kisses it.*)

PEPÍTA

I like to kiss your hand. It is so good, —  
So smooth and soft.

JUAN

Well, well, I'll sing to you.

PEPÍTA

A pretty song, loving and merry?

JUAN

Yes.

(JUAN *sings*).

*Memory,  
Tell to me  
What is fair,  
Past compare,  
In the land of Tubal?*

*Is it Spring's  
Lovely things,  
Blossoms white,  
Rosy dight?  
Then it is Pepíta.*

*Summer's crest*  
*Red-gold tressed,*  
*Corn-flowers peeping under? —*  
*Idle noons,*  
*Lingering moons,*  
*Sudden cloud,*  
*Lightning's shroud,*  
*Sudden rain,*  
*Quick again*  
*Smiles where late was thunder? —*

*Are all these*  
*Made to please?*  
*So too is Pepita.*

*Autumn's prime,*  
*Apple-time,*  
*Smooth cheek round,*  
*Heart all sound? —*  
*Is it this*  
*You would kiss?*  
*Then it is Pepita.*

*You can bring*  
*No sweet thing,*  
*But my mind*  
*Still shall find*  
*It is my Pepita.*

*Memory*  
*Says to me*  
*It is she, —*  
*She is fair*  
*Past compare*  
*In the land of Tubal.*

PEPÍTA (*seizing JUAN's hand again*)

Oh, then, you do love me?

JUAN

Yes, in the song.

PEPÍTA (*sadly*)

Not out of it? — not love me out of it?

JUAN

Only a little out of it, my bird.  
When I was singing I was *Andrès*, say,  
Or one who loves you better still than *Andrès*.

PEPÍTA

Not yourself?

JUAN

No!

PEPÍTA (*throwing his hand down pettishly*)

Then take it back again!

I will not have it!

JUAN

Listen, little one.  
Juan is not a living man all by himself:  
His life is breathed in him by other men,  
And they speak out of him. He is their voice.  
Juan's own life he gave once quite away.  
It was *Pepíta's* lover singing then, — not Juan.

114 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

We old, old poets, if we kept our hearts,  
 Should hardly know them from another man's.  
 They shrink to make room for the many more  
 We keep within us. There, now, — one more  
     kiss,  
 And then go home again.

PEPÍTA (*a little frightened, after letting JUAN  
 kiss her*)

You are not wicked?

JUAN

Ask your confessor, — tell him what I said.  
 (*PEPÍTA goes, while JUAN thrums his lute  
 again, and sings.*)

*Came a pretty maid  
 By the moon's pure light,  
 Loved me well, she said,  
 Eyes with tears all bright,  
 A pretty maid!*

*But too late she strayed,  
 Moonlight pure was there;  
 She was naught but shade  
 Hiding the more fair,  
 The heavenly maid!*

*A vaulted room all stone. The light shed from a  
 high lamp. Wooden chairs, a desk, book-  
 shelves. The PRIOR, in white frock, a black  
 rosary with a crucifix of ebony and ivory at  
 his side, is walking up and down, holding a  
 written paper in his hands, which are clasped  
 behind him.*

What if this witness lies? he says he heard her  
 Counting her blasphemies on a rosary,  
 And in a bold discourse with Salomo,  
 Say that the Host was naught but ill-mixed flour,  
 That it was mean to pray, — she never prayed.  
 I know the man who wrote this for a cur,  
 Who follows Don Diego, sees life's good  
 In scraps my nephew flings to him. What then?  
 Particular lies may speak a general truth.  
 I guess him false, but know her heretic, —  
 Know her for Satan's instrument, bedecked  
 With heathenish charms, luring the souls of men  
 To damning trust in good unsanctified.  
 Let her be prisoned, — questioned, — she will give  
 Witness against herself, that were this false,

*(He looks at the paper again and reads, then  
 again thrusts it behind him.)*

The matter and the colour are not false:  
 The form concerns the witness, not the judge;  
 For proof is gathered by the sifting mind,  
 Not given in crude and formal circumstance.  
 Suspicion is a heaven-sent lamp, and I, —  
 I, watchman of the Holy Office, bear  
 That lamp in trust. I will keep faithful watch.  
 The Holy Inquisition's discipline  
 Is mercy, saving her, if penitent, —  
 God grant it! — else, — root up the poison-plant,  
 Though 't were a lily with a golden heart!  
 This spotless maiden with her pagan soul  
 Is the arch-enemy's trap: he turns his back  
 On all the prostitutes, and watches her  
 To see her poison men with false belief  
 In rebel virtues. She has poisoned Silva;  
 His shifting mind, dangerous in fitfulness,  
 Strong in the contradiction of itself,



## 116 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Carries his young ambitions wearily,  
 As holy vows regretted. Once he seemed  
 The fresh-oped flower of Christian knighthood, born  
 For feats of holy daring; and I said:  
 "That half of life which I, as monk, renounce,  
 Shall be fulfilled in him: Silva will be  
 That saintly noble, that wise warrior,  
 That blameless excellence in worldly gifts  
 I would have been, had I not asked to live  
 The higher life of man impersonal  
 Who reigns o'er all things by refusing all.  
 What is his promise now? Apostasy  
 From every high intent: — languid, nay, gone,  
 The prompt devoutness of a generous heart,  
 The strong obedience of a reverent will,  
 That breathes the Church's air and sees her light,  
 He peers and strains with feeble questioning,  
 Or else he jests. He thinks I know it not, —  
 I who have read the history of his lapse,  
 As clear as it is writ in the angel's book.  
 He will defy me, — flings great words at me, —  
 Me who have governed all our house's acts,  
 Since I, a stripling, ruled his stripling father.  
 This maiden is the cause, and if they wed,  
 The Holy War may count a captain lost.  
 For better he were dead than keep his place,  
 And fill it infamously: in God's war  
 Slackness is infamy. Shall I stand by  
 And let the tempter win? defraud Christ's cause,  
 And blot his banner? — all for scruples weak  
 Of pity towards their young and frolicsome blood;  
 Or nice discrimination of the tool  
 By which my hand shall work a sacred rescue?  
 The fence of rules is for the purblind crowd;  
 They walk by averaged precepts; sovereign men,  
 Seeing by God's light, see the general

By seeing all the special, — own no rule  
But their full vision of the moment's worth.  
'T is so God governs, using wicked men, —  
Nay, scheming fiends, to work his purposes.  
Evil that good may come? Measure the good  
Before you say what 's evil. Perjury?  
I scorn the perjurer, but I will use him  
To serve the holy truth. There is no lie  
Save in his soul, and let his soul be judged.  
I know the truth, and act upon the truth.

O God, thou knowest that my will is pure.  
Thy servant owns naught for himself, his wealth  
Is but obedience. And I have sinned  
In keeping small respects of human love, —  
Calling it mercy. Mercy? Where evil is  
True mercy must be terrible. Mercy would save.  
Save whom? Save serpents, locusts, wolves?  
Or out of pity let the idiots gorge  
Within a famished town? Or save the gains  
Of men who trade in poison lest they starve?  
Save all things mean and foul that clog the earth  
Stifling the better? Save the fools who cling  
For refuge round their hideous idol's limbs,  
So leave the idol grinning unconsumed,  
And save the fools to breed idolaters?  
Oh mercy worthy of the licking hound  
That knows no future but its feeding time!  
Mercy has eyes that pierce the ages, — sees  
From heights divine of the eternal purpose  
Far-scattered consequence in its vast sum;  
Chooses to save, but with illumined vision  
Sees that to save is greatly to destroy.  
'T is so the Holy Inquisition sees: its wrath  
Is fed from the strong heart of wisest love.  
For love must needs make hatred. He who loves

God and his law must hate the foes of God.  
 And I have sinned in being merciful:  
 Being slack in hate, I have been slack in love.

(*He takes the crucifix and holds it up before  
 him.*)

Thou shuddering, bleeding, thirsting, dying God,  
 Thou Man of Sorrows, scourged and bruised and  
 torn,

Suffering to save, — wilt thou not judge the world?  
 This arm which held the children, this pale hand  
 That gently touched the eyelids of the blind,  
 And opened passive to the cruel nail,  
 Shall one day stretch to leftward of thy throne,  
 Charged with the power that makes the lightning  
 strong,

And hurl thy foes to everlasting hell.

And thou, Immaculate Mother, Virgin mild,  
 Thou seven-fold pierced, thou pitying, pleading  
 Queen,

Shalt see and smile, while the black filthy souls  
 Sink with foul weight to their eternal place,  
 Purging the Holy Light. Yea, I have sinned  
 And called it mercy. But I shrink no more.  
 To-morrow morn this temptress shall be safe  
 Under the Holy Inquisition's key.

He thinks to wed her, and defy me then,  
 She being shielded by our house's name.  
 But he shall never wed her. I have said.

The time is come. *Exurge, Domine,*  
*Judica causam tuam.* Let thy foes  
 Be driven as the smoke before the wind,  
 And melt like wax upon the furnace lip!

*A large chamber richly furnished opening on a  
 terrace-garden, the trees visible through the win-*

*dow in faint moonlight. Flowers hanging about the window, lit up by the tapers. The casket of jewels open on a table. The gold necklace lying near. FEDALMA, splendidly dressed and adorned with pearls and rubies, is walking up and down.*

So soft a night was never made for sleep,  
But for the waking of the finer sense  
To every murmuring and gentle sound,  
To subtlest odours, pulses, visitings  
That touch our frames with wings too delicate  
To be discerned amid the blare of day.

*(She pauses near the window to gather some  
jasmine: then walks again.)*

Surely these flowers keep happy watch, — their  
breath  
Is their fond memory of the loving light.  
I often rue the hours I lose in sleep:  
It is a bliss too brief, only to see  
This glorious world, to hear the voice of love,  
To feel the touch, the breath of tenderness,  
And then to rest as from a spectacle.  
I need the curtained stillness of the night  
To live through all my happy hours again  
With more selection, — cull them quite away  
From blemished moments. Then in loneliness  
The face that bent before me in the day  
Rises in its own light, more vivid seems  
Painted upon the dark, and ceaseless glows  
With sweet solemnity of gazing love,  
Till like the heavenly blue it seems to grow  
Nearer, more kindred, and more cherishing,  
Mingling with all my being. Then the words,  
The tender low-toned words come back again,  
With repetition welcome as the chime



120 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Of softly hurrying brooks, — “ My only love, —  
 My love while life shall last, — my own Fedalma!”  
 Oh, it is mine, — the joy that once has been!  
 Poor eager hope is but a stammerer,  
 Must listen dumbly to great memory,  
 Who makes our bliss the sweeter by her telling.

*(She pauses a moment musingly.)*

But that dumb hope is still a sleeping guard  
 Whose quiet rhythmic breath saves me from dread  
 In this fair paradise. For if the earth  
 Broke off with flower-fringed edge, visibly sheer,  
 Leaving no footing for my forward step  
 But empty blackness . . .

Nay, there is no fear, —  
 They will renew themselves, day and my joy,  
 And all that past which is securely mine,  
 Will be the hidden root that nourishes  
 Our still unfolding, ever-ripening love!

*(While she is uttering the last words, a little  
 bird falls softly on the floor behind her;  
 she hears the light sound of its fall and  
 turns round.)*

Did something enter? . . .

Yes, this little bird . . .

*(She lifts it.)*

Dead and yet warm: 't was seeking sanctuary,  
 And died, perhaps of fright, at the altar foot.  
 Stay, there is something tied beneath the wing!  
 A strip of linen, streaked with blood, — what blood?  
 The streaks are written words, — are sent to me, —  
 O God, are sent to me! *Dear child, Fedalma,*  
*Be brave, give no alarm, — your Father comes!*

*(She lets the bird fall again.)*



My Father . . . comes . . . my Father. . . .

*(She turns in quivering expectation toward the window. There is perfect stillness a few moments until ZARCA appears at the window. He enters quickly and noiselessly; then stands still at his full height, and at a distance from FEDALMA.)*

FEDALMA *(in a low distinct tone of terror)*

It is he!

I said his fate had laid its hold on mine.

ZARCA *(advancing a step or two)*

You know, then, who I am?

FEDALMA

The prisoner, —

He whom I saw in fetters, — and this necklace —

ZARCA

Was played with by your fingers when it hung  
About my neck, full fifteen years ago!

FEDALMA *(starts, looks at the necklace and handles it, then speaks as if unconsciously)*

Full fifteen years ago!

ZARCA

The very day  
I lost you, when you wore a tiny gown  
Of scarlet cloth with golden broidery:  
'T was clasped in front by coins, — two golden  
coins.

122 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

The one towards the left was split in two  
Across the King's head, right from brow to nape,  
A dent i' the middle nicking in the cheek.  
You see I know the little gown by heart.

FEDALMA (*growing paler and more tremulous*)

Yes. It is true, — I have the gown, — the clasps, —  
The braid, — sore tarnished: — it is long ago!

ZARCA

But yesterday to me; for till to-day  
I saw you always as that little child.  
And when they took my necklace from me, still  
Your fingers played about it on my neck,  
And still those buds of fingers on your feet  
Caught in its meshes as you seemed to climb  
Up to my shoulder. You were not stolen all.  
You had a double life fed from my heart. . . .

(FEDALMA, *letting fall the necklace, makes  
an impulsive movement towards him with  
outstretched hands.*)

For the Zincalo loves his children well.

FEDALMA (*shrinking, trembling, and letting fall  
her hands*)

How came it that you sought me, — no, — I mean  
How came it that you knew me, — that you lost me?

ZARCA (*standing perfectly still*)

Poor child! I see, I see, — your ragged father  
Is welcome as the piercing wintry wind  
Within this silken chamber. It is well.  
I would not have a child who stooped to feign,  
And aped a sudden love. True hate were better.

FEDALMA (*raising her eyes towards him, with a flash of admiration, and looking at him fixedly*)

Father, how was it that we lost each other?

ZARCA

I lost you as a man may lose a diamond  
Wherein he has compressed his total wealth,  
Or the right hand whose cunning makes him great:  
I lost you by a trivial accident.

Marauding Spaniards, sweeping like a storm  
Over a spot within the Moorish bounds,  
Near where our camp lay, doubtless snatched you  
up,

When Zind, your nurse, as she confessed, was  
urged

By burning thirst to wander towards the stream,  
And leave you on the sand some paces off  
Playing with pebbles, while she dog-like lapped.

'T was so I lost you, — never saw you more

Until to-day I saw you dancing! Saw

The child of the Zincalo making sport

For those who spit upon her people's name.

FEDALMA (*vehemently*)

It was not sport. What if the world looked on? —

I danced for joy, — for love of all the world.

But when you looked at me my joy was stabbed, —

Stabbed with your pain. I wondered . . . now I  
know . . .

It was my father's pain.

(*She pauses a moment with eyes bent downward, during which ZARCA examines her face. Then she says quickly,*)

How were you sure

At once I was your child?

## ZARCA

Oh, I had witness strong  
 As any Cadi needs, before I saw you!  
 I fitted all my memories with the chat  
 Of one named Juan, — one whose rapid talk  
 Showers like the blossoms from a light-twigg'd  
 shrub,

If you but coughed beside it. I learned all  
 The story of your Spanish nurture, — all  
 The promise of your fortune. When at last  
 I fronted you, my little maid full-grown,  
 Belief was turned to vision: then I saw  
 That she whom Spaniards called the bright Fe-  
 dalma, —

The little red-frocked foundling three years old, —  
 Grown to such perfectness the Christian Duke  
 Had wooed her for his Duchess, — was the child,  
 Sole offspring of my flesh, that Lambra bore  
 One hour before the Christian, hunting us,  
 Hurried her on to death. Therefore I sought you,  
 Therefore I come to claim you — claim my child,  
 Not from the Spaniard, not from him who robbed,  
 But from herself.

*(FEDALMA has gradually approached close to  
 ZARCA, and with a low sob sinks on her  
 knees before him. He stoops to kiss her  
 brow, and lays his hands on her head.)*

ZARCA (*with solemn tenderness*)

Then my child owns her father?

FEDALMA

Father! yes.

I will eat dust before I will deny  
 The flesh I spring from.

ZARCA

There my daughter spoke.  
 Away then with these rubies!

*(He seizes the circlet of rubies and flings it on the ground. FEDALMA, starting from the ground with strong emotion, shrinks backward.)*

Such a crown  
 Is infamy on a Zincala's brow.  
 It is her people's blood, decking her shame.

FEDALMA *(after a moment, slowly and distinctly, as if accepting a doom).*

Then . . . I am . . . a Zincala?

ZARCA

Of a blood  
 Unmixed as virgin wine-juice.

FEDALMA

Of a race  
 More outcast and despised than Moor or Jew?

ZARCA

Yes: wanderers whom no god took knowledge of  
 To give them laws, to fight for them, or blight  
 Another race to make them ampler room;  
 A people with no home even in memory,  
 No dimmest lore of giant ancestors  
 To make a common hearth for piety.

FEDALMA

A race that lives on prey as foxes do  
 With stealthy, petty rapine: so despised,



It is not persecuted, only spurned,  
 Crushed underfoot, warred on by chance like rats,  
 Or swarming flies, or reptiles of the sea  
 Dragged in the net unsought, and flung far off  
 To perish as they may?

## ZARCA

You paint us well.

So abject are the men whose blood we share;  
 Untutored, unbefriended, unendowed;  
 No favourites of heaven or of men.  
 Therefore I cling to them! Therefore no lure  
 Shall draw me to disown them, or forsake  
 The meagre wandering herd that lows for help  
 And needs me for its guide, to seek my pasture  
 Among the well-fed bees that graze at will.  
 Because our race have no great memories,  
 I will so live they shall remember me  
 For deeds of such divine beneficence  
 As rivers have, that teach men what is good  
 By blessing them. I have been schooled, — have  
 caught  
 Lore from the Hebrew, deftness from the Moor, —  
 Know the rich heritage, the milder life,  
 Of nations fathered by a mighty Past;  
 But were our race accursed (as they who make  
 Good luck a god count all unlucky men)  
 I would espouse their curse sooner than take  
 My gifts from brethren naked of all good,  
 And lend them to the rich for usury.

(FEDALMA again advances, and putting forth  
 her right hand grasps ZARCA'S left. He  
 places his other hand on her shoulder.  
 They stand so, looking at each other.)

## ZARCA

And you, my child? are you of other mind,  
 Choosing forgetfulness, hating the truth  
 That says you are akin to needy men? —  
 Wishing your father were some Christian Duke,  
 Who could hang Gypsies when their task was done,  
 While you, his daughter, were not bound to care?

FEDALMA (*in a troubled, eager voice*)

No, I should always care — I cared for you —  
 For all, before I dreamed . . .

## ZARCA

Before you dreamed  
 You were a born Zincala, — in the bonds  
 Of the Zincali's faith.

FEDALMA (*bitterly*)

Zincali's faith?

Men say they have none.

## ZARCA

Oh, it is a faith  
 Taught by no priest, but by their beating hearts.  
 Faith to each other: the fidelity  
 Of fellow-wanderers in a desert place  
 Who share the same dire thirst, and therefore  
 share  
 The scanty water: the fidelity  
 Of men whose pulses leap with kindred fire,  
 Who in the flash of eyes, the clasp of hands,  
 The speech that even in lying tells the truth  
 Of heritage inevitable as past deeds,  
 Nay, in the silent bodily presence feel

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The mystic stirring of a common life  
Which makes the many one: fidelity  
To that deep consecrating oath our sponsor Fate  
Made through our infant breath when we were  
born,

The fellow-heirs of that small island, Life,  
Where we must dig and sow and reap with brothers.  
Fear thou that oath, my daughter, — nay, not  
fear,

But love it; for the sanctity of oaths  
Lies not in lightning that avenges them,  
But in the injury wrought by broken bonds  
And in the garnered good of human trust.  
And you have sworn, — even with your infant  
breath

You too were pledged . . .

FEDALMA (*lets go ZARCA'S hand and sinks back-  
ward on her knees, with bent head, as if before  
some impending crushing weight*)

What have I sworn?

ZARCA

To live the life of the Zincala's child:  
The child of him who, being chief, will be  
The saviour of his tribe, or if he fail  
Will choose to fail rather than basely win  
The prize of renegades. Nay — will not choose —  
Is there a choice for strong souls to be weak?  
For men erect to crawl like hissing snakes?  
I choose not, — I *am* Zarca. Let him choose  
Who halts and wavers, having appetite  
To feed on garbage. You, my child, — are you  
Halting and wavering?

FEDALMA (*raising her head*)

Say what is my task?

ZARCA

To be the angel of a homeless tribe:  
To help me bless a race taught by no prophet,  
And make their name, now but a badge of scorn,  
A glorious banner floating in their midst,  
Stirring the air they breathe with impulses  
Of generous pride, exalting fellowship  
Until it soars to magnanimity.  
I'll guide my brethren forth to their new land,  
Where they shall plant and sow and reap their  
own,  
Serving each other's needs, and so be spurred  
To skill in all the arts that succour life;  
Where we may kindle our first altar-fire  
From settled hearths, and call our Holy Place  
The hearth that binds us in one family.  
That land awaits them: they await their chief, —  
Me who am prisoned. All depends on you.

FEDALMA (*rising to her full height, and looking solemnly at ZARCA*)

Father, your child is ready! She will not  
Forsake her kindred: she will brave all scorn  
Sooner than scorn herself. Let Spaniards all,  
Christians, Jews, Moors, shoot out the lip and say,  
"Lo, the first hero in a tribe of thieves."  
Is it not written so of them? They, too,  
Were slaves, lost, wandering, sunk beneath a curse,  
Till Moses, Christ, and Mahomet were born,  
Till beings lonely in their greatness lived,  
And lived to save their people. Father, listen.  
To-morrow the Duke weds me secretly:

But straight he will present me as his wife  
 To all his household, cavaliers and dames  
 And noble pages. Then I will declare  
 Before them all: "I am his daughter, his,  
 The Gypsy's, owner of this golden badge."  
 Then I shall win your freedom; then the Duke —  
 Why, he will be your son! — will send you forth  
 With aid and honours. Then, before all eyes  
 I'll clasp this badge on you, and lift my brow  
 For you to kiss it, saying by that sign,  
 "I glory in my father." This, to-morrow.

## ZARCA

A woman's dream, — who thinks by smiling well  
 To ripen figs in frost. What! marry first,  
 And then proclaim your birth? Enslave yourself  
 To use your freedom? Share another's name,  
 Then treat it as you will? How will that tune  
 Ring in your bridegroom's ears, — that sudden  
 song  
 Of triumph in your Gypsy father?

FEDALMA (*discouraged*)<sup>1</sup>

Nay,

I meant not so. We marry hastily —  
 Yet there is time — there will be: — in less space  
 Than he can take to look at me, I'll speak  
 And tell him all. Oh, I am not afraid!  
 His love for me is stronger than all hate;  
 Nay, stronger than my love, which cannot sway  
 Demons that haunt me, — tempt me to rebel.  
 Were he Fedalma and I Silva, he  
 Could love confession, prayers, and tonsured monks  
 If my soul craved them. He will never hate  
 The race that bore him what he loves the most.



I shall but do more strongly what I will,  
 Having his will to help me. And to-morrow,  
 Father, as surely as this heart shall beat,  
 You, every chained Zincalo, shall be free.

ZARCA (*coming nearer to her, and laying his hand  
 on her shoulder*)

Too late, too poor a service that, my child!  
 Not so the woman who would save her tribe  
 Must help its heroes, — not by wordy breath,  
 By easy prayers strong in a lover's ear,  
 By showering wreaths and sweets and wafted kisses,  
 And then, when all the smiling work is done,  
 Turning to rest upon her down again,  
 And whisper languid pity for her race  
 Upon the bosom of her alien spouse.  
 Not to such petty mercies as can fall  
 'Twi'x't stitch and stitch of silken broidery work.  
 Such miracles of mitred saints who pause  
 Beneath their gilded canopy to heal  
 A man sun-stricken: not to such trim merit  
 As soils its dainty shoes for charity  
 And simpers meekly at the pious stain,  
 But never trod with naked bleeding feet  
 Where no man praised it, and where no Church  
 blessed:  
 Not to such almsdeeds fit for holidays  
 Were you, my daughter, consecrated, — bound  
 By laws that, breaking, you will dip your bread  
 In murdered brother's blood and call it sweet, —  
 When you were born in the Zincalo's tent,  
 And lifted up in sight of all your tribe,  
 Who greeted you with shouts of loyal joy,  
 Sole offspring of the chief in whom they trust  
 As in the oft-tried never-failing flint  
 They strike their fire from. Other work is yours.

## FEDALMA

What work? — what is it that you ask of me?

## ZARCA

A work as pregnant as the act of men  
Who set their ships aflame and spring to land,  
A fatal deed . . .

## FEDALMA

Stay! never utter it!  
If it can part my lot from his whose love  
Has chosen me. Talk not of oaths, of birth,  
Of men as numerous as the dim white stars, —  
As cold and distant, too, for my heart's pulse.  
No ills on earth, though you should count them up  
With grains to make a mountain, can outweigh  
For me, his ill who is my supreme love.  
All sorrows else are but imagined flames,  
Making me shudder at an unfelt smart,  
But his imagined sorrow is a fire  
That scorches me.

## ZARCA

I know, I know it well, —  
The first young passionate wail of spirits called  
To some great destiny. In vain, my daughter!  
Lay the young eagle in what nest you will,  
The cry and swoop of eagles overhead  
Vibrate prophetic in its kindred frame,  
And make it spread its wings and poise itself  
For the eagle's flight. Hear what you have to do.

(FEDALMA *breaks from him and stands half  
averted, as if she dreaded the effect of his  
looks and words.*)

My comrades even now file off their chains  
In a low turret by the battlements,  
Where we were locked with slight and sleepy  
guard, —

We who had files hid in our shaggy hair,  
And possible ropes that waited but our will  
In half our garments. Oh, the Moorish blood  
Runs thick and warm to us, though thinned by  
chrism.

I found a friend among our jailers, — one  
Who loves the Gypsy as the Moor's ally.  
I know the secrets of this fortress. Listen.  
Hard by yon terrace is a narrow stair,  
Cut in the living rock, and at one point  
In its slow straggling course it branches off  
Towards a low wooden door, that art has bossed  
To such unevenness, it seems one piece  
With the rough-hewn rock. Opened, it leads,  
Through a broad passage burrowed underground  
A good half-mile out to the open plain:  
Made for escape, in dire extremity  
From siege or burning, of the house's wealth  
In women or in gold. To find that door  
Needs one who knows the number of the steps  
Just to the turning-point; to open it,  
Needs one who knows the secret of the bolt.  
You have that secret: you will ope that door,  
And fly with us.

FEDALMA (*receding a little, and gathering herself  
up in an attitude of resolve opposite to ZARCA*)

No, I will never fly!  
Never forsake that chief half of my soul  
Where lies my love. I swear to set you free.  
Ask for no more; it is not possible.

Father, my soul is not too base to ring  
 At touch of your great thoughts; nay, in my blood  
 There streams the sense unspeakable of kind,  
 As leopard feels at ease with leopard. But, —  
 Look at these hands! You say when they were  
 little

They played about the gold upon your neck.  
 I do believe it, for their tiny pulse  
 Made record of it in the inmost coil  
 Of growing memory. But see them now!  
 Oh they have made fresh record; twined themselves  
 With other throbbing hands whose pulses feed  
 Not memories only but a blended life, —  
 Life that will bleed to death if it be severed.  
 Have pity on me, father! Wait the morning;  
 Say you will wait the morning. I will win  
 Your freedom openly: you shall go forth  
 With aid and honours. Silva will deny  
 Naught to my asking . . .

ZARCA (*with contemptuous decision*).

Till you ask him aught  
 Wherein he is powerless. Soldiers even now  
 Murmur against him that he risks the town,  
 And forfeits all the prizes of a foray  
 To get his bridal pleasure with a bride  
 Too low for him. They'll murmur more and  
 louder  
 If captives of our pith and sinew, fit  
 For all the work the Spaniard hates, are freed, —  
 Now, too, when Spanish hands are scanty. What,  
 Turn Gypsies loose instead of hanging them!  
 'T is flat against the edict. Nay, perchance  
 Murmurs aloud may turn to silent threats  
 Of some well-sharpened dagger; for your Duke

Has to his heir a pious cousin, who deems  
The Cross were better served if he were Duke.  
Such good you 'll work your lover by your prayers.

FEDALMA

Then, I will free you now! You shall be safe,  
Nor he be blamed, save for his love to me.  
I will declare what I have done: the deed  
May put our marriage off. . . .

ZARCA

Ay, till the time

When you shall be a queen in Africa,  
And he be prince enough to sue for you.  
You cannot free us and come back to him.

FEDALMA

And why?

ZARCA

I would compel you to go forth.

FEDALMA

You tell me that?

ZARCA

Yes, for I 'd have you choose;  
Though, being of the blood you are, — my blood, —  
You have no right to choose.

FEDALMA

I only owe

A daughter's debt; I was not born a slave.



## ZARCA

No, not a slave; but you were born to reign.  
 'T is a compulsion of a higher sort,  
 Whose fetters are the net invisible  
 That holds all life together. Royal deeds  
 May make long destinies for multitudes,  
 And you are called to do them. You belong  
 Not to the petty round of circumstance  
 That makes a woman's lot, but to your tribe,  
 Who trust in me and in my blood with trust  
 That men call blind; but it is only blind  
 As unyeaned reason is, that growing stirs  
 Within the womb of superstition.

## FEDALMA

No!

I belong to him who loves me — whom I love —  
 Who chose me — whom I chose — to whom I  
     pledged  
 A woman's truth. And that is nature too,  
 Issuing a fresher law than laws of birth.

## ZARCA

Well, then, unmake yourself from a Zincala, —  
 Unmake yourself from being child of mine!  
 Take holy water, cross your dark skin white;  
 Round your proud eyes to foolish kitten looks;  
 Walk mincingly, and smirk, and twitch your robe:  
 Unmake yourself, — doff all the eagle plumes  
 And be a parrot, chained to a ring that slips  
 Upon a Spaniard's thumb, at will of his  
 That you should prattle o'er his words again!  
 Get a small heart that flutters at the smiles  
 Of that plump penitent and greedy saint  
 Who breaks all treaties in the name of God,

Saves souls by confiscation, sends to heaven  
The altar-fumes of burning heretics,  
And chaffers with the Levite for the gold;  
Holds Gypsies beasts unfit for sacrifice,  
So sweeps them out like worms alive or dead.  
Go, trail your gold and velvet in her presence! —  
Conscious Zincala, smile at your rare luck,  
While half your brethren . . .

## FEDALMA

I am not so vile!  
It is not to such mockeries that I cling,  
Not to the flaring tow of gala-lights:  
It is to him — my love — the face of day.

## ZARCA

What, will you part him from the air he breathes,  
Never inhale with him although you kiss him?  
Will you adopt a soul without its thoughts,  
Or grasp a life apart from flesh and blood?  
Till then you cannot wed a Spanish Duke  
And not wed shame at mention of your race,  
And not wed hardness to their miseries, —  
Nay, not wed murder. Would you save my life  
Yet stab my purpose? maim my every limb,  
Put out my eyes, and turn me loose to feed?  
Is that salvation? rather drink my blood.  
That child of mine who weds my enemy, —  
Adores a God who took no heed of Gypsies, —  
Forsakes her people, leaves their poverty  
To join the luckier crowd that mocks their  
woes, —  
That child of mine is doubly murderess,  
Murdering her father's hope, her people's trust.  
Such draughts are mingled in your cup of love.

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And when you have become a thing so poor,  
Your life is all a fashion without law  
Save frail conjecture of a changing wish,  
Your worshipped sun, your smiling face of day,  
Will turn to cloudiness, and you will shiver  
In your thin finery of vain desire.  
Men call his passion madness; and he, too,  
May learn to think it madness: 't is a thought  
Of ducal sanity.

### FEDALMA

No, he is true!  
And if I part from him I part from joy.  
Oh, it was morning with us, — I seemed young.  
But now I know I am an aged sorrow, —  
My people's sorrow. Father, since I am yours, —  
Since I must walk an unslain sacrifice,  
Carrying the knife within me, quivering, —  
Put cords upon me, drag me to the doom  
My birth has laid upon me. See, I kneel:  
I cannot will to go.

### ZARCA

Will then to stay!  
Say you will take your better, painted such  
By blind desire, and choose the hideous worse  
For thousands who were happier but for you.  
My thirty followers are assembled now  
Without this terrace: I your father wait  
That you may lead us forth to liberty, —  
Restore me to my tribe, — five hundred men  
Whom I alone can save, alone can rule,  
And plant them as a mighty nation's seed.  
Why, vagabonds who clustered round one man,

Their voice of God, their prophet, and their  
 king,  
 Twice grew to empire on the teeming shores  
 Of Africa, and sent new royalties  
 To feed afresh the Arab sway in Spain.  
 My vagabonds are a seed more generous,  
 Quick as the serpent, loving as the hound,  
 And beautiful as disinherited gods.  
 They have a promised land beyond the sea:  
 There I may lead them, raise my standard, call  
 All wandering Zincali to that home,  
 And make a nation, — bring light, order, law,  
 Instead of chaos. You, my only heir,  
 Are called to reign for me when I am gone.  
 Now choose your deed: to save or to destroy.  
 You, woman and Zincala, fortunate  
 Above your fellows, — you who hold a curse  
 Or blessing in the hollow of your hand, —  
 Say you will loose that hand from fellowship,  
 Let go the rescuing rope, hurl all the tribes,  
 Children and countless beings yet to come,  
 Down from the upward path of light and joy,  
 Back to the dark and marshy wilderness  
 Where life is naught but blind tenacity  
 Of that which is. Say you will curse your race!

FEDALMA (*rising and stretching out her arms in deprecation*)

No, no, — I will not say it, — I will go!  
 Father, I choose! I will not take a heaven  
 Haunted by shrieks of far-off misery.  
 This deed and I have ripened with the hours:  
 It is a part of me, — awakened thought  
 That, rising like a giant, masters me,  
 And grows into a doom. O mother life,

That seemed to nourish me so tenderly,  
 Even in the womb you vowed me to the fire,  
 Hung on my soul the burden of men's hopes,  
 And pledged me to redeem! — I'll pay the debt.  
 You gave me strength that I should pour it all  
 Into this anguish. I can never shrink  
 Back into bliss, — my heart has grown too big  
 With things that might be. Father, I will go.  
 I will strip off these gems. Some happier bride  
 Shall wear them, since Fedalma would be dowered  
 With naught but curses, dowered with misery  
 Of men, — of women, who have hearts to bleed  
 As hers is bleeding.

*(She sinks on a seat, and begins to take off  
 her jewels.)*

Now, good gems, we part.  
 Speak of me always tenderly to Silva.

*(She pauses, turning to ZARCA.)*

O father, will the women of our tribe  
 Suffer as I do, in the years to come  
 When you have made them great in Africa?  
 Redeemed from ignorant ills only to feel  
 A conscious woe? Then, — is it worth the pains?  
 Were it not better when we reach that shore  
 To raise a funeral-pile and perish all?  
 So closing up a myriad avenues  
 To misery yet unwrought? My soul is faint, —  
 Will these sharp pangs buy any certain good?

#### ZARCA

Nay, never falter: no great deed is done  
 By falterers who ask for certainty.  
 No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,  
 The undivided will to seek the good:



'T is that compels the elements, and wrings  
 A human music from the indifferent air.  
 The greatest gift the hero leaves his race  
 Is to have been a hero. Say we fail! —  
 We feed the high tradition of the world,  
 And leave our spirit in Zincalo breasts.

FEDALMA (*unclasping her jewelled belt, and  
 throwing it down*)

Yes, say that we shall fail! I will not count  
 On aught but being faithful. I will take  
 This yearning self of mine and strangle it.  
 I will not be half-hearted: never yet  
 Fedalma did aught with a wavering soul.  
 Die, my young joy, — die, all my hungry hopes, —  
 The milk you cry for from the breast of life  
 Is thick with curses. Oh, all fatness here  
 Snatches its meat from leanness, — feeds on  
 graves.

I will seek nothing but to shun what's base.  
 The saints were cowards who stood by to see  
 Christ crucified: they should have flung themselves  
 Upon the Roman spears, and died in vain, —  
 The grandest death, to die in vain, — for love  
 Greater than sways the forces of the world.  
 That death shall be my bridegroom. I will wed  
 The curse of the Zincali. Father, come!

#### ZARCA

No curse has fallen on us till we cease  
 To help each other. You, if you are false  
 To that first fellowship, lay on the curse.  
 But write now to the Spaniard: briefly say  
 That I, your father, came; that you obeyed  
 The fate which made you a Zincala, as his fate

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Made him a Spanish duke and Christian knight.  
He must not think . . .

FEDALMA

Yes, I will write, but he,  
Oh, he would know it, — he would never think  
The chain that dragged me from him could be  
aught

But scorching iron entering in my soul.

(*She writes.*)

*Silva, sole love, — he came, — my father came.*

*I am the daughter of the Gypsy chief*

*Who means to be the Saviour of our tribe.*

*He calls on me to live for his great end.*

*To live? nay, die for it. Fedalma dies*

*In leaving Silva: all that lives henceforth*

*Is the Zincala.*

(*She rises.*)

Father, now I go  
To wed my people's lot.

ZARCA

To wed a crown.

We will make royal the Zincali's lot, —

Give it a country, homes, and monuments

Held sacred through the lofty memories

That we shall leave behind us. Come, my Queen!

FEDALMA

Stay, my betrothal ring! — one kiss, — farewell!

O love, you were my crown. No other crown

Is aught but thorns on my poor woman's brow.

(*Exeunt.*)

## BOOK II

SILVA was marching homeward while the  
moon  
Still shed mild brightness like the far-off  
hope

Of those pale virgin lives that wait and pray.  
The stars thin-scattered made the heavens large,  
Bending in slow procession; in the east  
Emergent from the dark waves of the hills,  
Seeming a little sister of the moon,  
Glowed Venus all unquenched. Silva, in haste,  
Exultant and yet anxious, urged his troop  
To quick and quicker march: he had delight  
In forward stretching shadows, in the gleams  
That travelled on the armour of the van,  
And in the many-hoofed sound: in all that told  
Of hurrying movement to o'ertake his thought  
Already in Bedmár, close to Fedalma,  
Leading her forth a wedded bride, fast vowed,  
Defying Father Isidor. His glance  
Took in with much content the priest who rode  
Firm in his saddle, stalwart and broad-backed,  
Crisp-curled, and comfortably secular,  
Right in the front of him. But by degrees  
Stealthily faint, disturbing with slow loss  
That showed not yet full promise of a gain,  
The light was changing and the watch intense  
Of moon and stars seemed weary, shivering:  
The sharp white brightness passed from off the  
rocks

Carrying the shadows: beauteous Night lay dead  
Under the pall of twilight, and the love-star  
Sickened and shrank. The troop was winding now

Upward to where a pass between the peaks  
 Seemed like an opened gate, — to Silva seemed  
 An outer-gate of heaven, for through that pass  
 They entered his own valley, near Bedmár.  
 Sudden within the pass a horseman rose  
 One instant dark upon the banner pale  
 Of rock-cut sky, the next in motion swift  
 With hat and plume high shaken, — ominous.  
 Silva had dreamed his future, and the dream  
 Held not this messenger. A minute more, —  
 It was his friend Don Alvar whom he saw  
 Reining his horse up, face to face with him,  
 Sad as the twilight, all his clothes ill-girt, —  
 As if he had been roused to see one die,  
 And brought the news to him whom death had  
 robbed.

Silva believed he saw the worst, — the town  
 Stormed by the infidel, — or, could it be  
 Fedalma dragged? — no, there was not yet time.  
 But with a marble face, he only said,  
 “What evil, Alvar?”

“What this paper speaks.”

It was Fedalma’s letter folded close  
 And mute as yet for Silva. But his friend  
 Keeping it still sharp-pinched against his breast,  
 “It will smite hard, my lord: a private grief.  
 I would not have you pause to read it here.  
 Let us ride on, — we use the moments best,  
 Reaching the town with speed. The smaller ill  
 Is that our Gypsy prisoners have escaped.”  
 “No more. Give me the paper, — nay, I know, —  
 ’T will make no difference. Bid them march on  
 faster.”

Silva pushed forward, — held the paper crushed  
 Close in his right. “They have imprisoned her,”  
 He said to Alvar in low, hard-cut tones,

Like a dream-speech of slumbering revenge.

“No, — when they came to fetch her, she was gone.”

Swift as the right touch on a spring, that word  
Made Silva read the letter. She was gone!

But not into locked darkness, — only gone  
Into free air, — where he might find her yet.

The bitter loss had triumph in it, — what!

They would have seized her with their holy claws?

The Prior's sweet morsel of despotic hate

Was snatched from off his lips. This misery

Had yet a taste of joy.

But she was gone!

The sun had risen, and in the castle walls

The light grew strong and stronger. Silva walked

Through the long corridor where dimness yet

Cherished a lingering, flickering, dying hope:

Fedalma still was there, — he could not see

The vacant place that once her presence filled.

Can we believe that the dear dead are gone?

Love in sad weeds forgets the funeral day,

Opens the chamber door and almost smiles, —

Then sees the sunbeams pierce athwart the bed

Where the pale face is not. So Silva's joy,

Like the sweet habit of caressing hands

That seek the memory of another hand,

Still lived on fitfully in spite of words,

And, numbing thought with vague illusion, dulled

The slow and steadfast beat of certainty.

But in the rooms inexorable light

Streamed through the open window where she  
fled,

Streamed on the belt and coronet thrown down, —

Mute witnesses, — sought out the typic ring

That sparkled on the crimson, solitary,

Wounding him like a word. O hateful light!



It filled the chambers with her absence, glared  
 On all the motionless things her hand had touched,  
 Motionless all, — save where old Iñez lay  
 Sunk on the floor holding her rosary,  
 Making its shadow tremble with her fear.  
 And Silva passed her by because she grieved:  
 It was the lute, the gems, the pictured heads,  
 He longed to crush, because they made no sign  
 But of insistence that she was not there,  
 She who had filled his sight and hidden them.  
 He went forth on the terrace tow'rd the stairs,  
 Saw the rained petals of the cistus flowers  
 Crushed by large feet; but on one shady spot  
 Far down the steps, where dampness made a  
 home,

He saw a footprint delicate-slipped, small,  
 So dear to him, he searched for sister-prints,  
 Searched in the rock-hewn passage with a lamp  
 For other trace of her, and found a glove;  
 But not Fedalma's. It was Juan's glove,  
 Tasselled, perfumed, embroidered with his name,  
 A gift of dames. Then, Juan, too, was gone?  
 Full-mouthed conjecture, hurrying through the  
 town,

Had spread the tale already, — it was he  
 That helped the Gypsies' flight. He talked and  
 sang

Of nothing but the Gypsies and Fedalma.  
 He drew the threads together, wove the plan.  
 Had lingered out by moonlight and been seen  
 Strolling, as was his wont, within the walls,  
 Humming his ditties. So Don Alvar told,  
 Conveying outside rumour. But the Duke  
 Keeping his haughtiness as a visor closed  
 Would show no agitated front in quest  
 Of small disclosures. What her writing bore

Had been enough. He knew that she was gone,  
Knew why.

“The Duke,” some said, “will send a force,  
Retake the prisoners, and bring back his bride.”  
But others, winking, “Nay, her wedding dress  
Would be the *san-benito*. ’T is a fight  
Between the Duke and Prior. Wise bets will  
choose

The churchman: he ’s the iron, and the Duke” —  
“Is a fine piece of pottery,” said mine host,  
Softening the epigram with a bland regret.

*There* was the thread that in the new-made knot  
Of obstinate circumstance seemed hardest drawn,  
Vexed most the sense of Silva, in these hours  
Of fresh and angry pain, — there, in that fight  
Against a foe whose sword was magical,  
His shield invisible terrors, — against a foe  
Who stood as if upon the smoking mount  
Ordaining plagues. All else, Fedalma’s flight,  
The father’s claim, her Gypsy birth disclosed,  
Were momentary crosses, hindrances  
A Spanish noble might despise. This Chief  
Might still be treated with, would not refuse  
A proffered ransom, which would better serve  
Gypsy prosperity, give him more power  
Over his tribe, than any fatherhood:  
Nay, all the father in him must plead loud  
For marriage of his daughter where she loved, —  
Her love being placed so high and lustrously.  
The keen Zincalo had foreseen a price  
That would be paid him for his daughter’s  
dower, —

Might soon give signs. Oh, all his purpose lay  
Face upward. Silva here felt strong, and smiled.  
What could a Spanish noble not command?

He only helped the Queen, because he chose, —  
 Could war on Spaniards, and could spare the  
 Moor, —

Buy justice, or defeat it, — if he would:  
 Was loyal, not from weakness but from strength  
 Of high resolve to use his birthright well.  
 For nobles too are gods, like Emperors,  
 Accept perforce their own divinity  
 And wonder at the virtue of their touch,  
 Till obstinate resistance shakes their creed,  
 Shattering that self whose wholeness is not rounded  
 Save in the plastic souls of other men.  
 Don Silva had been suckled in that creed  
 (A speculative noble else, knowing Italian),  
 Held it absurd as foolish argument  
 If any failed in deference, was too proud  
 Not to be courteous to so poor a knave  
 As one who knew not necessary truths  
 Of birth and precedence; but cross his will,  
 The miracle-working will, his rage leaped out  
 As by a right divine to rage more fatal  
 Than a mere mortal man's. And now that will  
 Had met a stronger adversary, — strong  
 As awful ghosts are whom we cannot touch,  
 While they grasp *us*, subtly as poisoned air,  
 In deep-laid fibres of inherited fear  
 That lie below all courage.

Silva said,  
 “ She is not lost to me, might still be mine  
 But for the Inquisition, — the dire hand  
 That waits to clutch her with a hideous grasp,  
 Not passionate, human, living, but a grasp  
 As in the death-throe when the human soul  
 Departs and leaves force unrelenting, locked,  
 Not to be loosened save by slow decay  
 That frets the universe. Father Isidor

Has willed it so: his phial dropped the oil  
 To catch the air-borne motes of idle slander;  
 He fed the fascinated gaze that clung  
 Round all her movements, frank as growths  
 With the new hateful interest of suspicion.  
 What barrier is this Gypsy? a mere gate  
 I'll find the key for. The one barrier,  
 The tightening cord that winds about my limbs,  
 Is this kind uncle, this imperious saint,  
 He who will save me, guard me from myself.  
 And he can work his will: I have no help  
 Save reptile secrecy, and no revenge  
 Save that I *will* do what he schemes to hinder.  
 Ay, secrecy, and disobedience, — these  
 No tyranny can master. Disobey!  
 You may divide the universe with God,  
 Keeping your will unbent, and hold a world  
 Where he is not supreme. The Prior shall know it!  
 His will shall breed resistance: he shall do  
 The thing he would not, further what he hates  
 By hardening my resolve."

But 'neath this inward speech, —  
 Predominant, hectoring, the more passionate voice  
 Of many-blended consciousness, — there breathed  
 Murmurs of doubt, the weakness of a self  
 That is not one; denies and yet believes;  
 Protests with passion, "This is natural," —  
 Yet owns the other still were truer, better,  
 Could nature follow it. A self disturbed  
 By budding growths of reason premature  
 That breed disease. Spite of defiant rage  
 Silva half shrank before the steadfast man  
 Whose life was one compacted whole, a state  
 Where the rule changed not, and the law was  
 strong.

Then straightway he resented that forced tribute,



150 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Rousing rebellion with intenser will.  
 But soon this inward strife the slow-paced hours  
 Slackened; and the soul sank with hunger-pangs,  
 Hunger of love. Debate was swept right down  
 By certainty of loss intolerable.  
 A little loss! only a dark-tressed maid  
 Who had no heritage save her beauteous being!  
 But in the candour of her virgin eyes  
 Saying, I love; and in the mystic charm  
 Of her dear presence, Silva found a heaven  
 Where faith and hope were drowned as stars in  
 day.

Fedalma there, each momentary Now  
 Seemed a whole blest existence, a full cup  
 That, flowing over, asked no pouring hand  
 From past to future. All the world was hers.  
 Splendour was but the herald trumpet note  
 Of her imperial coming: penury  
 Vanished before her as before a gem  
 The pledge of treasuries. Fedalma there,  
 He thought all loveliness was lovelier,  
 She crowning it: all goodness credible,  
 Because of the great trust her goodness bred.  
 For the strong current of that passionate love  
 Which urged his life tow'rds hers, like urgent  
 floods

That hurry through the various-mingled earth,  
 Carried within its stream all qualities  
 Of what it penetrated, and made love  
 Only another name, as Silva was,  
 For the whole man that breathed within his frame.  
 And she was gone. Well, goddesses will go;  
 But for a noble there were mortals left  
 Shaped just like goddesses, — O hateful sweet!  
 O impudent pleasure that should dare to front  
 With vulgar visage memories divine!



The noble's birthright of miraculous will  
Turning *I would* to *must be*, spurning all  
Offered as substitute for what it chose,  
Tightened and fixed in strain irrevocable  
The passionate selection of that love  
Which came not first but as all-conquering last.  
Great Love has many attributes, and shrines  
For varied worshippers, but his force divine  
Shows most its many-named fulness in the man  
Whose nature multitudinously mixed,  
Each ardent impulse grappling with a thought  
Resists all easy gladness, all content  
Save mystic rapture, where the questioning soul  
Flooded with consciousness of good that is  
Finds life one bounteous answer. So it was  
In Silva's nature, Love had mastery there,  
Not as a holiday ruler, but as one  
Who quells a tumult in a day of dread,  
A welcomed despot.

Oh, all comforters,  
All soothing things that bring mild ecstasy,  
Came with her coming, in her presence lived.  
Spring afternoons, when delicate shadows fall  
Pencilled upon the grass; high summer morns  
When white light rains upon the quiet sea  
And corn-fields flush with ripeness; odours soft, —  
Dumb vagrant bliss that seems to seek a home  
And find it deep within 'mid stirrings vague  
Of far-off moments when our life was fresh;  
All sweetly-tempered music, gentle change  
Of sound, form, colour, as on wide lagoons  
At sunset when from black far-floating prows  
Comes a clear wafted song; all exquisite joy  
Of a subdued desire, like some strong stream  
Made placid in the fulness of a lake, —  
All came with her sweet presence, for she brought

The love supreme which gathers to its realm  
 All powers of loving. Subtle nature's hand  
 Waked with a touch the intricate harmonies  
 In her own manifold work. Fedalma there,  
 Fastidiousness became the prelude fine  
 For full-contentment, and young melancholy,  
 Lost for its origin, seemed but the pain  
 Of waiting for that perfect happiness —  
 The happiness was gone!

He sat alone,  
 Hating companionship that was not hers;  
 Felt bruised with hopeless longing; drank, as  
 wine,  
 Illusions of what had been, would have been;  
 Weary with anger and a strained resolve,  
 Sought passive happiness in a waking dream.  
 It has been so with rulers, emperors,  
 Nay, sages who held secrets of great Time,  
 Sharing his hoary and beneficent life, —  
 Men who sat throned among the multitudes, —  
 They have sore sickened at the loss of one.  
 Silva sat lonely in her chamber, leaned  
 Where she had leaned, to feel the evening breath  
 Shed from the orange-trees; when suddenly  
 His grief was echoed in a sad young voice  
 Far and yet near, brought by aerial wings.

*The world is great: the birds all fly from me,  
 The stars are golden fruit upon a tree  
 All out of reach: my little sister went,  
 And I am lonely.*

*The world is great: I tried to mount the hill  
 Above the pines, where the light lies so still,  
 But it rose higher: little Lisa went,  
 And I am lonely.*

*The world is great: the wind comes rushing by,  
I wonder where it comes from; sea-birds cry  
And hurt my heart: my little sister went,  
And I am lonely.*

*The world is great: the people laugh and talk,  
And make loud holiday: how fast they walk!  
I'm lame, they push me: little Lisa went,  
And I am lonely.*

'T was Pablo, like the wounded spirit of song  
Pouring melodious pain to cheat the hour  
For idle soldiers in the castle court.  
Dreamily Silva heard and hardly felt  
The song was outward, rather felt it part  
Of his own aching, like the lingering day,  
Or slow and mournful cadence of the bell.  
But when the voice had ceased, he longed  
for it,  
And fretted at the pause, as memory frets  
When words that made its body fall away  
And leave it yearning dumbly. Silva then  
Bethought him whence the voice came, framed  
perforce  
Some outward image of a life not his  
That made a sorrowful centre to the world, —  
A boy lame, melancholy-eyed, who bore  
A viol, — yes, that very child he saw  
This morning eating roots by the gateway, —  
saw  
As one fresh-ruined sees and spells a name  
And knows not what he does, yet finds it writ  
Full in the inner record. Hark, again!  
The voice and viol. Silva called his thought  
To guide his ear and track the travelling sound.

*O bird that used to press  
 Thy head against my cheek  
 With touch that seemed to speak  
 And ask a tender "yes," —  
 Ay de mi, my bird!*

*O tender downy breast  
 And warmly beating heart,  
 That beating seemed a part  
 Of me who gave it rest, —  
 Ay de mi, my bird!*

The western court! The singer might be seen  
 From the upper gallery: quick the Duke was there  
 Looking upon the court as on a stage.  
 Men eased of armour, stretched upon the ground,  
 Gambling by snatches; shepherds from the hills  
 Who brought their bleating friends for slaughter;  
 grooms  
 Shouldering loose harness; leather-aproned smiths,  
 Traders with wares, green-suited serving-men,  
 Made a round audience; and in their midst  
 Stood little Pablo, pouring forth his song,  
 Just as the Duke had pictured. But the song  
 Was strangely companied by Roldan's play  
 With the swift-gleaming balls, and now was  
 crushed  
 By peals of laughter at grave Annibal,  
 Who carrying stick and purse o'erturned the pence  
 Making mistake by rule. Silva had thought  
 To melt hard bitter grief by fellowship  
 With the world-sorrow trembling in his ear  
 In Pablo's voice; had meant to give command  
 For the boy's presence; but this company,  
 This mountebank and monkey, must be — stay!  
*Not* be excepted — must be ordered too



Into his private presence; they had brought  
 Suggestion of a ready shapen tool  
 To cut a path between his helpless wish  
 And what it imaged. A ready shapen tool!  
 A spy, an envoy whom he might despatch  
 In unsuspected secrecy, to find  
 The Gypsies' refuge so that none beside  
 Might learn it. And this juggler could be bribed,  
 Would have no fear of Moors, — for who would  
 kill

Dancers and monkeys? — could pretend a journey  
 Back to his home, leaving his boy the while  
 To please the Duke with song. Without such  
 chance, —

An envoy cheap and secret as a mole  
 Who could go scathless, come back for his pay  
 And vanish straight, tied by no neighbourhood, —  
 Without such chance as this poor juggler brought,  
 Finding Fedalma was betraying her.

Short interval betwixt the thought and deed.  
 Roldan was called to private audience  
 With Annibal and Pablo. All the world  
 (By which I mean the score or two who heard)  
 Shrugged high their shoulders, and supposed the  
 Duke

Would fain beguile the evening and replace  
 His lacking happiness, as was the right  
 Of nobles, who could pay for any cure,  
 And wore naught broken, save a broken limb.  
 In truth, at first, the Duke bade Pablo sing,  
 But, while he sang, called Roldan wide apart,  
 And told him of a mission secret, brief, —  
 A quest which well performed might earn much  
 gold,

But, if betrayed, another sort of wages.



Roldan was ready; "wished above all for gold  
 And never wished to speak; had worked enough  
 At wagging his old tongue and chiming jokes;  
 Thought it was others' turn to play the fool.  
 Give him but pence enough, no rabbit, sirs,  
 Would eat and stare and be more dumb than he.  
 Give him his orders."

They were given straight;  
 Gold for the journey, and to buy a mule  
 Outside the gates through which he was to pass  
 Afoot and carelessly. The boy would stay  
 Within the castle, at the Duke's command,  
 And must have naught but ignorance to betray  
 For threats or coaxing. Once the quest performed,  
 The news delivered with some pledge of truth  
 Safe to the Duke, the juggler should go forth,  
 A fortune in his girdle, take his boy  
 And settle firm as any planted tree  
 In fair Valencia, never more to roam.

"Good! good! most worthy of a great hidalgo!  
 And Roldan was the man! But Annibal, —  
 A monkey like no other, though morose  
 In private character, yet full of tricks, —  
 'T were hard to carry him, yet harder still  
 To leave the boy and him in company  
 And free to slip away. The boy was wild  
 And shy as mountain kid; once hid himself  
 And tried to run away; and Annibal,  
 Who always took the lad's side (he was small,  
 And they were nearer of a size, and, sirs,  
 Your monkey has a spite against us men  
 For being bigger), — Annibal went too.  
 Would hardly know himself, were he to lose  
 Both boy and monkey, — and 't was property,  
 The trouble he had put in Annibal.  
 He did n't choose another man should beat

His boy and monkey. If they ran away  
Some man would snap them up, and square himself  
And say they were his goods, — he'd taught  
them, — no!

He Roldan had no mind another man  
Should fatten by his monkey, and the boy  
Should not be kicked by any pair of sticks  
Calling himself a juggler." . . .

But the Duke,  
Tired of that hammering, signed that it should  
cease;

Bade Roldan quit all fears, — the boy and ape  
Should be safe lodged in Abderahman's tower,  
In keeping of the great physician there,  
The Duke's most special confidant and friend,  
One skilled in taming brutes, and always kind.  
The Duke himself this eve would see them lodged.  
Roldan must go, — spend no more words, — but  
go.

---

A room high up in Abderahman's tower,  
A window open to the still warm eve,  
And the bright disk of royal Jupiter.  
Lamps burning low make little atmospheres  
Of light amid the dimness; here and there  
Show books and phials, stones and instruments.  
In carved dark-oaken chair, unpillowed, sleeps  
Right in the rays of Jupiter a small man,  
In skull-cap bordered close with crisp gray curls,  
And loose black gown showing a neck and breast  
Protected by a dim-green amulet;  
Pale-faced, with finest nostril wont to breathe  
Ethereal passion in a world of thought;  
Eyebrows jet-black and firm, yet delicate;  
Beard scant and grizzled; mouth shut firm, with  
curves

158 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

So subtly turned to meanings exquisite,  
You seem to read them as you read a word  
Full-vowelled, long-descended, pregnant, — rich  
With legacies from long, laborious lives.  
Close by him, like a genius of sleep,  
Purrs the gray cat, bridling, with snowy breast.  
A loud knock. "Forward!" in clear vocal ring.  
Enter the Duke, Pablo, and Annibal.  
Exit the cat, retreating toward the dark.

DON SILVA

You slept, Sephardo. I am come too soon.

SEPHARDO

Nay, my lord, it was I who slept too long.  
I go to court among the stars to-night,  
So bathed my soul beforehand in deep sleep.  
But who are these?

DON SILVA

Small guests, for whom I ask  
Your hospitality. Their owner comes  
Some short time hence to claim them. I am  
pledged  
To keep them safely; so I bring them you,  
Trusting your friendship for small animals.

SEPHARDO

Yea, am not I too a small animal?

DON SILVA

I shall be much beholden to your love  
If you will be their guardian. I can trust

No other man so well as you. The boy  
Will please you with his singing, touches too  
The viol wondrously.

SEPHARDO

They are welcome both.  
Their names are?

DON SILVA

Pablo, this — this Annibal,  
And yet, I hope, no warrior.

SEPHARDO

We'll make peace.  
Come, Pablo, let us loosen our friend's chain.  
Deign you, my lord, to sit. Here, Pablo, thou —  
Close to my chair. Now Annibal shall choose.

[The cautious monkey, in a Moorish dress, -  
A tunic white, turban and scymitar,  
Wears these stage garments, nay, his very flesh  
With silent protest; keeps a neutral air  
As aiming at a metaphysic state  
'Twixt "is" and "is not;" lets his chain be loosed  
By sage Sepharo's hands, sits still at first,  
Then trembles out of his neutrality,  
Looks up and leaps into Sepharo's lap,  
And chatters forth his agitated soul,  
Turning to peep at Pablo on the floor.]

SEPHARDO

See, he declares we are at amity!

DON SILVA

No brother sage had read your nature faster.

## SEPHARDO

Why, so he *is* a brother sage. Man thinks  
 Brutes have no wisdom, since they know not his:  
 Can we divine their world? — the hidden life  
 That mirrors us as hideous shapeless power,  
 Cruel supremacy of sharp-edged death,  
 Or fate that leaves a bleeding mother robbed?  
 Oh, they have long tradition and swift speech,  
 Can tell with touches and sharp darting cries  
 Whole histories of timid races taught  
 To breathe in terror by red-handed man.

## DON SILVA

Ah, you denounce my sport with hawk and  
 hound.  
 I would not have the angel Gabriel  
 As hard as you in noting down my sins.

## SEPHARDO

Nay, they are virtues for you warriors, —  
 Hawking and hunting! You are merciful  
 When you leave killing men to kill the brutes.  
 But, for the point of wisdom, I would choose  
 To know the mind that stirs between the wings  
 Of bees and building wasps, or fills the woods  
 With myriad murmurs of responsive sense  
 And true-aimed impulse, rather than to know  
 The thoughts of warriors.

## DON SILVA

Yet they are warriors too, —  
 Your animals. Your judgment limps, SepharDO:  
 Death is the king of this world; 't is his park  
 Where he breeds life to feed him. Cries of pain



Are music for his banquet; and the masque, —  
 The last grand masque for his diversion, is  
 The Holy Inquisition.

## SEPHARDO

Ay, anon

I may chime in with you. But not the less  
 My judgment has firm feet. Though death were  
 king,

And cruelty his right-hand minister,  
 Pity insurgent in some human breasts  
 Makes spiritual empire, reigns supreme  
 As persecuted faith in faithful hearts.  
 Your small physician, weighing ninety pounds,  
 A petty morsel for a healthy shark,  
 Will worship mercy throned within his soul  
 Though all the luminous angels of the stars  
 Burst into cruel chorus on his ear,  
 Singing, "We know no mercy." He would  
 cry

"I know it" still, and soothe the frightened bird  
 And feed the child a-hungred, walk abreast  
 Of persecuted men, and keep most hate  
 For rational torturers. There I stand firm.  
 But you are bitter, and my speech rolls on  
 Out of your note.

## DON SILVA

No, no, I follow you.  
 I too have that within which I will worship  
 In spite of — yes, Sephardo, I am bitter.  
 I need your counsel, foresight, all your aid.  
 Lay these small guests to bed, then we will talk.

## SEPHARDO

See, they are sleeping now. The boy has made  
 My leg his pillow. For my brother sage,  
 He 'll never heed us; he knit long ago  
 A sound ape-system, wherein men are brutes  
 Emitting doubtful noises. Pray, my lord,  
 Unlade what burdens you: my ear and hand  
 Are servants of a heart much bound to you.

## DON SILVA

Yes, yours is love that roots in gifts bestowed  
 By you on others, and will thrive the more  
 The more it gives. I have a double want:  
 First a confessor, — not a Catholic;  
 A heart without a livery, — naked manhood.

## SEPHARDO

My lord, I will be frank, there 's no such thing  
 As naked manhood. If the stars look down  
 On any mortal of our shape, whose strength  
 Is to judge all things without preference,  
 He is a monster, not a faithful man.  
 While my heart beats, it shall wear livery, —  
 My people's livery, whose yellow badge  
 Marks them for Christian scorn. I will not say  
 Man is first man to me, then Jew or Gentile:  
 That suits the rich *marranos*; but to me  
 My father is first father and then man.  
 So much for frankness' sake. But let that pass.  
 'T is true at least, I am no Catholic,  
 But Salomo SepharDO, a born Jew,  
 Willing to serve Don Silva.

## DON SILVA

Oft you sing

Another strain, and melt distinctions down,  
As no more real than the wall of dark  
Seen by small fishes' eyes, that pierce a span  
In the wide ocean. Now you league yourself  
To hem me, hold me prisoner in bonds  
Made, say you, — how? — by God or Demiurge,  
By spirit or flesh, — I care not! Love was made  
Stronger than bonds, and where they press must  
break them.

I came to you that I might breathe at large,  
And now you stifle me with talk of birth,  
Of race and livery. Yet you knew Fedalma.  
She was your friend, Sephardo. And you know  
She is gone from me, — know the hounds are  
loosed  
To dog me if I seek her.

## SEPHARDO

Yes, I know.

Forgive me that I used untimely speech,  
Pressing a bruise. I loved her well, my lord:  
A woman mixed of such fine elements  
That were all virtue and religion dead  
She'd make them newly, being what she was.

## DON SILVA

*Was?* say not *was*, Sephardo! She still lives, —  
Is, and is mine; and I will not renounce  
What heaven, nay, what she gave me. I will  
sin,  
If sin I must, to win my life again.  
The fault lie with those powers who have embroiled  
The world in hopeless conflict, where all truth

164 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Fights manacled with falsehood, and all good  
Makes but one palpitating life with evil.

(DON SILVA *pauses*. SEPHARDO *is silent*.)

SepharDO, speak! am I not justified?  
You taught my mind to use the wing that soars  
Above the petty fences of the herd:  
Now, when I need your doctrine, you are dumb.

SEPHARDO

Patience! *Hidalgos* want interpreters  
Of untold dreams and riddles; they insist  
On dateless horoscopes, on formulas  
To raise a possible spirit, nowhere named.  
Science must be their wishing cap; the stars  
Speak plainer for high largesse. No, my lord!  
I cannot counsel you to unknown deeds.  
Thus much I can divine: you wish to find  
Her whom you love, — to make a secret search.

DON SILVA

That is begun already: a messenger  
Unknown to all has been despatched this night.  
But forecast must be used, a plan devised,  
Ready for service when my scout returns,  
Bringing the invisible thread to guide my steps  
Toward that lost self my life is aching with.  
SepharDO, I will go: and I must go  
Unseen by all save you; though, at our need,  
We may trust Alvar.

SEPHARDO

A grave task, my lord.  
Have you a shapen purpose, or mere will  
That sees the end alone and not the means?  
Resolve will melt no rocks.

## DON SILVA

But it can scale them.

This fortress has two private issues: one,  
Which served the Gypsies' flight, to me is closed:  
Our bands must watch the outlet, now betrayed  
To cunning enemies. Remains one other,  
Known to no man save me: a secret left  
As heirloom in our house: a secret safe  
Even from him, — from Father Isidor.  
'T is he who forces me to use it, — he:  
All's virtue that cheats bloodhounds. Hear,  
Sephardo.

Given, my scout returns and brings me news  
I can straight act on, I shall want your aid.  
The issue lies below this tower, your fastness,  
Where, by my charter, you rule absolute.  
I shall feign illness; you with mystic air  
Must speak of treatment asking vigilance  
(Nay, I *am* ill, — my life has half ebb'd out).  
I shall be whimsical, devolve command  
On Don Diego, speak of poisoning,  
Insist on being lodged within this tower,  
And rid myself of tendance save from you  
And perhaps from Alvar. So I shall escape  
Unseen by spies, shall win the days I need  
To ransom her and have her safe enshrined.  
No matter, were my flight disclosed at last:  
I shall come back as from a duel fought  
Which no man can undo. Now you know all.  
Say, can I count on you?

## SEPHARDO

For faithfulness

In aught that I may promise — yes, my lord.  
But—for a pledge of faithfulness—this warning.



I will betray naught for your personal harm:  
 I love you. But note this, — I am a Jew;  
 And while the Christian persecutes my race,  
 I'll turn at need even the Christian's trust  
 Into a weapon and a shield for Jews.  
 Shall Cruelty crowned — wielding the savage  
                   force

Of multitudes, and calling savageness God  
 Who gives it victory — upbraid deceit  
 And ask for faithfulness? I love you well.  
 You are my friend. But yet you are a Christian,  
 Whose birth has bound you to the Catholic kings.  
 There may come moments when to share my joy  
 Would make you traitor, when to share your grief  
 Would make me other than a Jew . . .

## DON SILVA

What need

To urge that now, Sephardo? I am one  
 Of many Spanish nobles who detest  
 The roaring bigotry of the herd, would fain  
 Dash from the lips of king and queen the cup  
 Filled with besotting venom, half infused  
 By avarice and half by priests. And now, —  
 Now when the cruelty you flout me with  
 Pierces me too in the apple of my eye,  
 Now when my kinship scorches me like hate  
 Flashed from a mother's eye, you choose this time  
 To talk of birth as of inherited rage  
 Deep-down, volcanic, fatal, bursting forth  
 From under hard-taught reason? Wondrous  
                   friendship!

My uncle Isidor's echo, mocking me,  
 From the opposing quarter of the heavens,  
 With iteration of the thing I know,  
 That I'm a Christian knight and Spanish noble!

The consequence? Why, that I know. It lies  
In my own hands and not on raven tongues.  
The knight and noble shall not wear the chain  
Of false-linked thoughts in brains of other men.  
What question was there 'twixt us two, of aught  
That makes division? When I come to you  
I come for other doctrine than the Prior's.

## SEPHARDO

My lord, you are o'erwrought by pain. My words,  
That carried innocent meaning, do but float  
Like little emptied cups upon the flood  
Your mind brings with it. I but answered you  
With regular proviso, such as stands  
In testaments and charters, to forefend  
A possible case which none deem likelihood;  
Just turned my sleeve, and pointed to the brand  
Of brotherhood that limits every pledge.  
Superfluous nicety, — the student's trick,  
Who will not drink until he can define  
What water is and is not. But enough.  
My will to serve you now knows no division  
Save the alternate beat of love and fear.  
There's danger in this quest, — name, honour,  
    life, —  
My lord, the stake is great, and are you sure . . .

## DON SILVA

No, I am sure of naught but this, SepharDO,  
That I will go. Prudence is but conceit  
Hoodwinked by ignorance. There's naught exists  
That is not dangerous and holds not death  
For souls or bodies. Prudence turns its helm  
To flee the storm and lands 'mid pestilence.  
Wisdom must end by throwing dice with folly

But for dire passion which alone makes choice.  
 And I have chosen as the lion robbed  
 Chooses to turn upon the ravisher.  
 If love were slack, the Prior's imperious will  
 Would move it to outmatch him. But, Sephardo,  
 Were all else mute, all passive as sea-calms,  
 My soul is one great hunger, — I must see her.  
 Now you are smiling. Oh, you merciful men  
 Pick up coarse griefs and fling them in the face  
 Of us whom life with long descent has trained  
 To subtler pains, mocking your ready balms.  
 You smile at my soul's hunger.

## SEPHARDO

Science smiles

And sways our lips in spite of us, my lord,  
 When thought weds fact, — when maiden  
     prophecy  
 Waiting, believing, sees the bridal torch.  
 I use not vulgar measures for your grief,  
 My pity keeps no cruel feasts; but thought  
 Has joys apart, even in blackest woe,  
 And seizing some fine thread of verity  
 Knows momentary godhead.

## DON SILVA

And your thought?

## SEPHARDO

Seized on the close agreement of your words  
 With what is written in your horoscope.

## DON SILVA

Reach it me now.

## SEPHARDO

By your leave, Annibal.

*(He places ANNIBAL on PABLO's lap and rises. The boy moves without waking, and his head falls on the opposite side. SEPHARDO fetches a cushion and lays PABLO's head gently down upon it, then goes to reach the parchment from a cabinet. ANNIBAL, having waked up in alarm, shuts his eyes quickly again and pretends to sleep.)*

## DON SILVA

I wish, by new appliance of your skill,  
 Reading afresh the records of the sky,  
 You could detect more special augury.  
 Such chance oft happens, for all characters  
 Must shrink or widen, as our wine-skins do,  
 For more or less that we can pour in them;  
 And added years give ever a new key  
 To fixed prediction.

SEPHARDO *(returning with the parchment and re-seating himself)*

True; our growing thought  
 Makes growing revelation. But demand not  
 Specific augury, as of sure success  
 In meditated projects, or of ends  
 To be foreknown by peeping in God's scroll.  
 I say — nay, Ptolemy said it, but wise books  
 For half the truths they hold are honoured  
 tombs —  
 Prediction is contingent, of effects  
 Where causes and concomitants are mixed  
 To seeming wealth of possibilities

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Beyond our reckoning. Who will pretend  
To tell the adventures of each single fish  
Within the Syrian Sea? Show me a fish,  
I'll weigh him, tell his kind, what he devoured,  
What would have devoured *him*, — but for one

Blas

Who netted him instead; nay, could I tell  
That had Blas missed him, he would not have  
died

Of poisonous mud, and so made carrion,  
Swept off at last by some sea-scavenger?

DON SILVA

Ay, now you talk of fishes, you get hard.  
I note you merciful men: you can endure  
Torture of fishes and hidalgos. Follows?

SEPHARDO

By how much, then, the fortunes of a man  
Are made of elements refined and mixed  
Beyond a tunny's, what our science tells  
Of the stars' influence hath contingency  
In special issues. Thus, the loadstone draws,  
Acts like a will to make the iron submit;  
But garlic rubbing it, that chief effect  
Lies in suspense; the iron keeps at large,  
And garlic is controller of the stone.  
And so, my lord, your horoscope declares  
Naught absolutely of your sequent lot,  
But, by our lore's authentic rules, sets forth  
What gifts, what dispositions, likelihoods,  
The aspects of the heavens conspired to fuse  
With your incorporate soul. Aught more than  
this  
Is vulgar doctrine. For the ambient,



Though a cause regnant, is not absolute,  
But suffers a determining restraint  
From action of the subject qualities  
In proximate motion.

DON SILVA

Yet you smiled just now  
At some close fitting of my horoscope  
With present fact, — with this resolve of mine  
To quit the fortress?

SEPHARDO

Nay, not so, I smiled,  
Observing how the temper of your soul  
Sealed long tradition of the influence shed  
By the heavenly spheres. Here is your horoscope:  
The aspects of the moon with Mars conjunct,  
Of Venus and the Sun with Saturn, lord  
Of the ascendant, make symbolic speech  
Whereto your words gave running paraphrase.

DON SILVA (*impatiently*)

What did I say?

SEPHARDO

You spoke as oft you did  
When I was schooling you at Córdoba,  
And lessons on the noun and verb were drowned  
With sudden stream of general debate  
On things and actions. Always in that stream  
I saw the play of babbling currents, saw  
A nature o'er-endowed with opposites  
Making a self alternate, where each hour  
Was critic of the last, each mood too strong

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For tolerance of its fellow in close yoke.  
The ardent planets stationed as supreme,  
Potent in action, suffer light malign  
From luminaries large and coldly bright  
Inspiring meditative doubt, which straight  
Doubts of itself, by interposing act  
Of Jupiter in the fourth house fortified  
With power ancestral. So, my lord, I read  
The changeless in the changing; so I read  
The constant action of celestial powers  
Mixed into waywardness of mortal men,  
Whereof no sage's eye can trace the course  
And see the close.

### DON SILVA

Fruitful result, O sage!  
Certain uncertainty.

### SEPHARDO

Yea, a result  
Fruitful as seeded earth, where certainty  
Would be as barren as a globe of gold.  
I love you, and would serve you well, my lord.  
Your rashness vindicates itself too much,  
Puts harshness on of cobweb theory  
While rushing like a cataract. Be warned.  
Resolve with you is a fire-breathing steed,  
But it sees visions, and may feel the air  
Impassable with thoughts that come too late,  
Rising from out the grave of murdered honour.  
Look at your image in your horoscope:

*(Laying the horoscope before SILVA)*

You are so mixed, my lord, that each to-day  
May seem a maniac to its morrow.

DON SILVA (*pushing away the horoscope, rising  
and turning to look out at the open window*)

No!

No morrow e'er will say that I am mad  
Not to renounce her. Risks! I know them all.  
I've dogged each lurking, ambushed consequence.  
I've handled every chance to know its shape  
As blind men handle bolts. Oh, I'm too sane,  
I see the Prior's nets. He does my deed;  
For he has narrowed all my life to this, —  
That I must find her by some hidden means.

(*He turns and stands close in front of SEPHARDO.*)

One word, Sephardo, — leave that horoscope,  
Which is but iteration of myself,  
And give me promise. Shall I count on you  
To act upon my signal? Kings of Spain  
Like me have found their refuge in a Jew,  
And trusted in his counsel. You will help me?

#### SEPHARDO

Yes, my lord, I will help you. Israel  
Is to the nations as the body's heart:  
Thus saith the Book of Light: and I will act  
So that no man may ever say through me  
"Your Israel is naught," and make my deeds  
The mud they fling upon my brethren.  
I will not fail you, save, — you know the terms:  
I am a Jew, and not that infamous life  
That takes on bastardy, will know no father,  
So shrouds itself in the pale abstract, Man.  
You should be sacrificed to Israel  
If Israel needed it.

## DON SILVA

I fear not that.

I am no friend of fines and banishment,  
Or flames that, fed on heretics, still gape,  
And must have heretics made to feed them still.  
I take your terms, and, for the rest, your love  
Will not forsake me.

## SEPHARDO

'T is hard Roman love,  
That looks away and stretches forth the sword  
Bared for its master's breast to run upon.  
But you will have it so. Love shall obey.

*(SILVA turns to the window again, and is silent  
for a few moments, looking at the sky.)*

## DON SILVA

See now, SepharDO, you would keep no faith  
To smooth the path of cruelty. Confess,  
The deed I would not do, save for the strait  
Another brings me to (quit my command,  
Resign it for brief space, I mean no more), —  
Were that deed branded, then the brand should fix  
On him who urged me.

## SEPHARDO

Will it, though, my lord?

## DON SILVA

I speak not of the fact, but of the right.

## SEPHARDO

My lord, you said but now you were resolved.  
Question not if the world will be unjust

Branding your deed. If conscience has two courts  
 With differing verdicts, where shall lie the appeal?  
 Our law must be without us or within.  
 The Highest speaks through all our people's voice,  
 Custom, tradition, and old sanctities;  
 Or he reveals himself by new decrees  
 Of inward certitude.

DON SILVA

My love for her  
 Makes highest law, must be the voice of God.

SEPHARDO

I thought, but now, you seemed to make excuse,  
 And plead as in some court where Spanish knights  
 Are tried by other laws than those of love.

DON SILVA

'T was momentary. I shall dare it all.  
 How the great planet glows, and looks at me,  
 And seems to pierce me with his effluence!  
 Were he a living God, these rays that stir  
 In me the pulse of wonder were in him  
 Fulness of knowledge. Are you certified,  
 Sephardo, that the astral science shrinks  
 To such pale ashes, dead symbolic forms  
 For that congenital mixture of effects  
 Which life declares without the aid of lore?  
 If there are times propitious or malign  
 To our first framing, then must all events  
 Have favouring periods: you cull your plants  
 By signal of the heavens, then why not trace  
 As others would by astrologic rule  
 Times of good augury for momentous acts, —  
 As secret journeys?



## SEPHARDO

O my lord, the stars  
 Act not as witchcraft or as muttered spells.  
 I said before they are not absolute,  
 And tell no fortunes. I adhere alone  
 To such tradition of their agencies  
 As reason fortifies.

## DON SILVA

A barren science!  
 Some argue now 't is folly. 'T were as well  
 Be of their mind. If those bright stars had  
 will, —  
 But they are fatal fires, and know no love.  
 Of old, I think, the world was happier  
 With many gods, who held a struggling life  
 As mortals do, and helped men in the straits  
 Of forced misdoing. I doubt that horoscope.

(DON SILVA turns from the window and re-  
 seats himself opposite SEPHARDO.)

I am most self-contained, and strong to bear.  
 No man save you has seen my trembling lip  
 Uttering her name, since she was lost to me.  
 I'll face the progeny of all my deeds.

## SEPHARDO

May they be fair! No horoscope makes slaves.  
 'T is but a mirror, shows one image forth,  
 And leaves the future dark with endless "ifs."

## DON SILVA

I marvel, my SepharDO, you can pinch  
 With confident selection these few grains,

And call them verity, from out the dust  
Of crumbling error. Surely such thought creeps,  
With insect exploration of the world.  
Were I a Hebrew, now, I would be bold.  
Why should you fear, not being Catholic?

## SEPHARDO

Lo! you yourself, my lord, mix subtleties  
With gross belief; by momentary lapse  
Conceive, with all the vulgar, that we Jews  
Must hold ourselves God's outlaws, and defy  
All good with blasphemy, because we hold  
Your good is evil; think we must turn pale  
To see our portraits painted in your hell,  
And sin the more for knowing we are lost.

## DON SILVA

Read not my words with malice. I but meant,  
My temper hates an over-cautious march.

## SEPHARDO

The Unnamable made not the search for truth  
To suit hidalgos' temper. I abide  
By that wise spirit of listening reverence  
Which marks the boldest doctors of our race.  
For truth, to us, is like a living child  
Born of two parents: if the parents part  
And will divide the child, how shall it live?  
Or, I will rather say: Two angels guide  
The path of man, both aged and yet young,  
As angels are, ripening through endless years.  
On one he leans: some call her Memory,  
And some, Tradition; and her voice is sweet,  
With deep mysterious accords: the other,  
Floating above, holds down a lamp which streams

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A light divine and searching on the earth,  
 Compelling eyes and footsteps. Memory yields,  
 Yet clings with loving check, and shines anew  
 Reflecting all the rays of that bright lamp  
 Our angel Reason holds. We had not walked  
 But for Tradition; we walk evermore  
 To higher paths, by brightening Reason's lamp.  
 Still we are purblind, tottering. I hold less  
 Than Aben-Ezra, of that aged lore  
 Brought by long centuries from Chaldæan plains;  
 The Jew-taught Florentine rejects it all.  
 For still the light is measured by the eye,  
 And the weak organ fails. I may see ill;  
 But over all belief is faithfulness,  
 Which fulfils vision with obedience.  
 So, I must grasp my morsels: truth is oft  
 Scattered in fragments round a stately pile  
 Built half of error; and the eye's defect  
 May breed too much denial. But, my lord,  
 I weary your sick soul. Go now with me  
 Into the turret. We will watch the spheres,  
 And see the constellations bend and plunge  
 Into a depth of being where our eyes  
 Hold them no more. We'll quit ourselves  
 and be  
 The red Aldebaran or bright Sirius,  
 And sail as in a solemn voyage, bound  
 On some great quest we know not.

DON SILVA

Let us go.  
 She may be watching too, and thought of her  
 Sways me, as if she knew, to every act  
 Of pure allegiance.

## SEPHARDO

That is love's perfection, —  
 Tuning the soul to all her harmonies  
 So that no chord can jar. Now we will mount.  
 (*Exeunt.*)

[A large hall in the Castle, of Moorish architecture. On the side where the windows are, an outer gallery. Pages and other young gentlemen attached to DON SILVA'S household, gathered chiefly at one end of the hall. Some are moving about; others are lounging on the carved benches; others, half stretched on pieces of matting and carpet, are gambling. ARIAS, a stripling of fifteen, sings by snatches in a boyish treble, as he walks up and down, and tosses back the nuts which another youth flings towards him. In the middle DON AMADOR, a gaunt, gray-haired soldier, in a handsome uniform, sits in a marble red-cushioned chair, with a large book spread out on his knees, from which he is reading aloud, while his voice is half drowned by the talk that is going on around him, first one voice and then another surging above the hum.]

ARIAS (*singing*)

There was a holy hermit  
 Who counted all things loss  
 For Christ his Master's glory:  
 He made an ivory cross,  
 And as he knelt before it  
 And wept his murdered Lord,  
 The ivory turned to iron,  
 The cross became a sword.

JOSÉ (*from the floor*)

I say, twenty cruzados! thy Galician wit  
Can never count.

HERNANDO (*also from the floor*)

And thy Sevillian wit always counts double.

ARIAS (*singing*)

*The tears that fell upon it,  
They turned to red, red rust,  
The tears that fell from off it  
Made writing in the dust.  
The holy hermit, gazing,  
Saw words upon the ground:  
"The sword be red forever  
With the blood of false Mahound."*

DON AMADOR (*looking up from his book, and raising his voice*).

What, gentlemen! Our glorious Lady defend us!

ENRIQUEZ (*from the benches*)

Serves the infidels right! They have sold Christians enough to people half the towns in Paradise. If the Queen, now, had divided the pretty damsels of Malaga among the Castilians who have been helping in the holy war, and not sent half of them to Naples . . .

ARIAS (*singing again*).

*At the battle of Clavijo  
In the days of King Ramiro,  
Help us, Allah! cried the Moslem,  
Cried the Spaniard, Heaven's chosen,  
God and Santiago!*



## FABIAN

Oh, the very tail of our chance has vanished. The royal army is breaking up, — going home for the winter. The Grand Master sticks to his own border.

ARIAS (*singing*)

*Straight out-flushing like the rainbow,  
See him come, celestial Baron,  
Mounted knight, with red-crossed banner,  
Plunging earthward to the battle,  
Glorious Santiago!*

## HURTADO

Yes, yes, through the pass of By-and-by you go to the valley of Never. We might have done a great feat, if the Marquis of Cadiz . . .

ARIAS (*sings*)

*As the flame before the swift wind,  
See, he fires us, we burn with him!  
Flash our swords, dash Pagans backward, —  
Victory he! pale fear is allah!  
God with Santiago!*

DON AMADOR (*raising his voice to a cry*)

Sangre de Dios, gentlemen!

*.(He shuts the book, and lets it fall with a bang on the floor. There is instant silence.)*

To what good end is it that I, who studied at Salamanca, and can write verses agreeable to the glorious Lady with the point of a sword which hath done harder service, am reading aloud in a

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clerkly manner from a book which hath been culled from the flowers of all books, to instruct you in the knowledge befitting those who would be knights and worthy hidalgos. I had as lief be reading in a belfry. And gambling too! As if it were a time when we needed not the help of God and the saints! Surely for the space of one hour ye might subdue your tongues to your ears that so your tongues might learn somewhat of civility and modesty. Wherefore am I master of the Duke's retinue, if my voice is to run along like a gutter in a storm?

HURTADO (*lifting up the book, and respectfully presenting it to DON AMADOR*)

Pardon, Don Amador! The air is so commoved by your voice, that it stirs our tongues in spite of us.

DON AMADOR (*reopening the book*)

Confess, now, it is a goose-headed trick, that when rational sounds are made for your edification, you find naught in it but an occasion for purposeless gabble. I will report it to the Duke, and the reading-time shall be doubled, and my office of reader shall be handed over to Fray Domingo.

(*While DON AMADOR has been speaking, DON SILVA, with DON ALVAR, has appeared walking in the outer gallery on which the windows are opened.*)

ALL (*in concert*)

No, no, no,

## DON AMADOR

Are ye ready, then, to listen, if I finish the wholesome extract from the Seven Parts, wherein the wise King Alfonso hath set down the reason why knights should be of gentle birth? Will ye now be silent?

## ALL

Yes, silent.

## DON AMADOR

But when I pause, and look up, I give any leave to speak, if he hath aught pertinent to say.

*(Reads)*

“And this nobility cometh in three ways: *first*, by lineage; *secondly*, by science; and *thirdly*, by valour and worthy behaviour. Now, although they who gain nobility through science or good deeds are rightfully called noble and gentle; nevertheless, they are with the highest fitness so called who are noble by ancient lineage, and lead a worthy life as by inheritance from afar; and hence are more bound and constrained to act well, and guard themselves from error and wrong-doing; for in their case it is more true that by evil-doing they bring injury and shame not only on themselves, but also on those from whom they are derived.”

(DON AMADOR *places his forefinger for a mark on the page, and looks up, while he keeps his voice raised, as wishing DON SILVA to overhear him in the judicious discharge of his function.*)

Hear ye that, young gentlemen? See ye not that if ye had but bad manners even, they disgrace you more than gross misdoings disgrace the low-born? Think you, Arias, it becomes the son of your house irreverently to sing and fling nuts, to the interruption of your elders?

ARIAS (*sitting on the floor and leaning backward on his elbows*)

Nay, Don Amador; King Alfonso, they say, was a heretic, and I think that is not true writing. For noble birth gives us more leave to do ill if we like.

DON AMADOR (*lifting his brows*)

What bold and blasphemous talk is this?

ARIAS

Why, nobles are only punished now and then, in a grand way, and have their heads cut off, like the Grand Constable. I should n't mind that.

JOSÉ

Nonsense, Arias! nobles have their heads cut off because their crimes are noble. If they did what was unknighly, they would come to shame. Is n't that true, Don Amador?

DON AMADOR

Arias is a contumacious puppy, who will bring dishonour on his parentage. Pray, sirrah, whom did you ever hear speak as you have spoken?

ARIAS

Nay, I speak out of my own head. I shall go and ask the Duke.

HURTADO

Now, now! you are too bold, Arias.

ARIAS

Oh, he is never angry with me (*dropping his voice*), because the Lady Fedalma liked me. She said I was a good boy, and pretty, and that is what you are not, Hurtado.

HURTADO

Girl-face! See, now, if you dare ask the Duke.

(DON SILVA is just entering the hall from the gallery, with ALVAR behind him, intending to pass out at the other end. All rise with homage. DON SILVA bows coldly and abstractedly. ARIAS advances from the group, and goes up to DON SILVA.)

ARIAS

My lord, is it true that a noble is more dishonoured than other men if he does aught dishonourable?

DON SILVA (*first blushing deeply, and grasping his sword, then raising his hand and giving ARIAS a blow on the ear*)

Varlet!



## ARIAS

My lord, I am a gentleman.

(DON SILVA *pushes him away, and passes on hurriedly.*)

DON ALVAR (*following and turning to speak*)

Go, go! you should not speak to the Duke when you are not called upon. He is ill and much distempered.

(*ARIAS retires, flushed, with tears in his eyes. His companions look too much surprised to triumph. DON AMADOR remains silent and confused.*)

*The Praça Santiago during busy market-time. Mules and asses laden with fruits and vegetables. Stalls and booths filled with wares of all sorts. A crowd of buyers and sellers. A stalwart woman with keen eyes, leaning over the panniers of a mule laden with apples, watches LORENZO, who is lounging through the market. As he approaches her, he is met by BLASCO.*

## LORENZO

Well met, friend.

## BLASCO

Ay, for we are soon to part,  
And I would see you at the hostelry,  
To take my reckoning. I go forth to-day.

## LORENZO

'T is grievous parting with good company.  
I would I had the gold to pay such guests  
For all my pleasure in their talk.

BLASCO

Why, yes;

A solid-headed man of Aragon  
 Has matter in him that you Southerners lack.  
 You like my company, — 't is natural.  
 But, look you, I have done my business well,  
 Have sold and ta'en commissions. I come straight  
 From — you know who — I like not naming him.  
 I'm a thick man: you reach not my backbone  
 With any toothpick. But I tell you this:  
 He reached it with his eye, right to the marrow!  
 It gave me heart that I had plate to sell,  
 For, saint or no saint, a good silversmith  
 Is wanted for God's service; and my plate —  
 He judged it well — bought nobly.

LORENZO

A great man,

And holy!

BLASCO

Yes, I'm glad I leave to-day.  
 For there are stories give a sort of smell, —  
 One's nose has fancies. A good trader, sir,  
 Likes not this plague of lapsing in the air,  
 Most caught by men with funds. And they *do*  
 say  
 There's a great terror here in Moors and Jews,  
 I would say, Christians of unhappy blood.  
 'T is monstrous, sure, that men of substance  
 lapse,  
 And risk their property. I know I'm sound.  
 No heresy was ever bait to me. Whate'er  
 Is the right faith, that I believe, — naught else.

## LORENZO

Ay, truly, for the flavour of true faith  
 Once known must sure be sweetest to the taste.  
 But an uneasy mood is now abroad  
 Within the town; partly, for that the Duke  
 Being sorely sick, has yielded the command  
 To Don Diego, a most valiant man,  
 More Catholic than the Holy Father's self,  
 Half chiding God that he will tolerate  
 A Jew of Arab; though 't is plain they 're made  
 For profit of good Christians. And weak heads —  
 Panic will knit all disconnected facts —  
 Draw hence belief in evil auguries,  
 Rumours of accusation and arrest,  
 All air-begotten. Sir, you need not go.  
 But if it must be so, I 'll follow you  
 In fifteen minutes, — finish marketing,  
 Then be at home to speed you on your way.

## BLASCO

Do so. I 'll back to Saragossa straight.  
 The court and nobles are retiring now  
 And wending northward. There 'll be fresh de-  
 mand  
 For bells and images against the Spring,  
 When doubtless our great Catholic sovereigns  
 Will move to conquest of these eastern parts,  
 And cleanse Granada from the infidel.  
 Stay, sir, with God until we meet again!

## LORENZO

Go, sir, with God, until I follow you!

(*Exit* BLASCO. LORENZO passes on towards  
 the market-woman, who, as he approaches,  
 raises herself from her leaning attitude.)

LORENZO

Good day, my mistress. How 's your merchandise?  
Fit for a host to buy? Your apples now,  
They have fair cheeks; how are they at the core?

MARKET-WOMAN

Good, good, sir! Taste and try. See, here is one  
Weighs a man's head. The best are bound with  
tow:

They 're worth the pains, to keep the peel from  
splits.

*(She takes out an apple bound with tow, and,  
as she puts it into LORENZO's hand, speaks  
in a lower tone.)*

'T is called the Miracle. You open it,  
And find it full of speech.

LORENZO

Ay, give it me,  
I 'll take it to the Doctor in the tower.  
He feeds on fruit, and if he likes the sort  
I 'll buy them for him. Meanwhile, drive your ass  
Round to my hostelry. I 'll straight be there.  
You 'll not refuse some barter?

MARKET-WOMAN

No, not I.

Feathers and skins.

LORENZO

Good, till we met again.

*(LORENZO, after smelling at the apple, puts  
it into a pouch-like basket which hangs be-  
fore him, and walks away. The woman  
drives off the mule.)*

## A LETTER

“Zarca, the chief of the Zincali, greets  
The King El Zagal. Let the force be sent  
With utmost swiftness to the Pass of Luz.  
A good five hundred added to my bands  
Will master all the garrison: the town  
Is half with us, and will not lift an arm  
Save on our side. My scouts have found a way  
Where once we thought the fortress most secure:  
Spying a man upon the height, they traced,  
By keen conjecture piercing broken sight,  
His downward path, and found its issue. There  
A file of us can mount, surprise the fort  
And give the signal to our friends within  
To ope the gates for our confederate bands,  
Who will lie eastward ambushed by the rocks,  
Waiting the night. Enough; give me command,  
Bedmár is yours. Chief Zarca will redeem  
His pledge of highest service to the Moor:  
Let the Moor, too, be faithful and repay  
The Gypsy with the furtherance he needs  
To lead his people over Bahr el Scham  
And plant them on the shore of Africa.  
So may the King El Zagal live as one  
Who, trusting Allah will be true to him,  
Maketh himself as Allah true to friends.”



## BOOK III

QUIT now the town, and with a journeying  
 dream  
 Swift as the wings of sound yet seeming  
 slow

Through multitudinous compression of stored sense  
 And spiritual space, see walls and towers  
 Lie in the silent whiteness of a trance,  
 Giving no sign of that warm life within  
 That moves and murmurs through their hidden  
 heart.

Pass o'er the mountain, wind in sombre shade,  
 Then wind into the light and see the town  
 Shrunk to white crust upon the darken rock.  
 Turn east and south, descend, then rise anew  
 'Mid smaller mountains ebbing towards the plain:  
 Scent the fresh breath of the height-loving herbs  
 That, trodden by the pretty parted hoofs  
 Of nimble goats, sigh at the innocent bruise,  
 And with a mingled difference exquisite  
 Pour a sweet burden on the buoyant air.  
 Pause now and be all ear. Far from the south,  
 Seeking the listening silence of the heights,  
 Comes a slow-dying sound, — the Moslems' call  
 To prayer in afternoon. Bright in the sun  
 Like tall white sails on a green shadowy sea  
 Stand Moorish watch-towers: 'neath that eastern  
 sky

Couches unseen the strength of Moorish Baza:  
 Where the meridian bends lies Guadix, hold  
 Of brave El Zagal. This is Moorish land,  
 Where Allah lives unconquered in dark breasts  
 And blesses still the many-nourishing earth  
 With dark-armed industry. See from the steep

The scattered olives hurry in gray throngs  
 Down towards the valley, where the little stream  
 Parts a green hollow 'twixt the gentler slopes;  
 And in that hollow, dwellings: not white homes  
 Of building Moors, but little swarthy tents  
 Such as of old perhaps on Asian plains,  
 Or wending westward past the Caucasus,  
 Our fathers raised to rest in. Close they swarm  
 About two taller tents, and viewed afar  
 Might seem a dark-robed crowd in penitence  
 That silent kneel; but come now in their midst  
 And watch a busy, bright-eyed, sportive life!  
 Tall maidens bend to feed the tethered goat,  
 The ragged kirtle fringing at the knee  
 Above the living curves, the shoulder's smoothness  
 Parting the torrent strong of ebon hair.  
 Women with babes, the wild and neutral glance  
 Swayed now to sweet desire of mothers' eyes,  
 Rock their strong cradling arms and chant low  
     strains  
 Taught by monotonous and soothing winds  
 That fall at night-time on the dozing ear.  
 The crones plait reeds, or shred the vivid herbs  
 Into the caldron: tiny urchins crawl  
 Or sit and gurgle forth their infant joy.  
 Lads lying sphinx-like with uplifted breast  
 Propped on their elbows, their black manes tossed  
     back,  
 Fling up the coin and watch its fatal fall,  
 Dispute and scramble, run and wrestle fierce,  
 Then fall to play and fellowship again;  
 Or in a thieving swarm they run to plague  
 The grandsires, who return with rabbits slung,  
 And with the mules fruit-laden from the fields.  
 Some striplings choose the smooth stones from the  
     brook

To serve the slingers, cut the twigs for snares,  
Or trim the hazel-wands, or at the bark  
Of some exploring dog they dart away  
With swift precision towards a moving speck.  
These are the brood of Zarca's Gypsy tribe;  
Most like an earth-born race bred by the Sun  
On some rich tropic soil, the father's light  
Flashing in coal black eyes, the mother's blood  
With bounteous elements feeding their young limbs.  
The stalwart men and youths are at the wars  
Following their chief, all save a trusty band  
Who keep strict watch along the northern heights.

But see, upon a pleasant spot removed  
From the camp's hubbub, where the thicket strong  
Of huge-eared cactus makes a bordering curve  
And casts a shadow, lies a sleeping man  
With Spanish hat screening his upturned face,  
His doublet loose, his right arm backward flung,  
His left caressing close the long-necked lute  
That seems to sleep too, leaning tow'rds its lord.  
He draws deep breath secure but not unwatched.  
Moving a-tiptoe, silent as the elves,  
As mischievous too, trip three barefooted girls  
Not opened yet to womanhood, — dark flowers  
In slim long buds: some paces farther off  
Gathers a little white-teethed shaggy group,  
A grinning chorus to the merry play.  
The tripping girls have robbed the sleeping man  
Of all his ornaments. Hita is decked  
With an embroidered scarf across her rags;  
Tralla, with thorns for pins, sticks two rosettes  
Upon her threadbare woollen; Hinda now,  
Prettiest and boldest, tucks her kirtle up  
As wallet for the stolen buttons, — then  
Bends with her knife to cut from off the hat

The aigrette and the feather; deftly cuts,  
 Yet wakes the sleeper, who with sudden start  
 Shakes off the masking hat and shows the face  
 Of Juan: Hinda swift as thought leaps back,  
 But carries off the feather and aigrette,  
 And leads the chorus of a happy laugh,  
 Running with all the naked-footed imps,  
 Till with safe survey all can face about  
 And watch for signs of stimulating chase,  
 While Hinda ties long grass around her brow  
 To stick the feather in with majesty.  
 Juan still sits contemplative, with looks  
 Alternate at the spoilers and their work.

## JUAN

Ah, you marauding kite, — my feather gone!  
 My belt, my scarf, my buttons and rosettes!  
 This is to be a brother of Zincali!  
 The fiery-blooded children of the Sun, —  
 So says chief Zarca, — children of the Sun!  
 Ay, ay, the black and stinging flies he breeds  
 To plague the decent body of mankind.  
 Orpheus, professor of the *gai saber*,  
 Made all the brutes polite, they say, by dint of song.  
 Pregnant, — but as a guide in daily life  
 Delusive. For if song and music cure  
 The barbarous trick of thieving, 't is a cure  
 That works as slowly as old Doctor Time  
 In curing folly. Why, the minxes there  
 Have rhythm in their toes, and music rings  
 As readily from them as from little bells  
 Swung by the breeze. Well, I will try the physic.

(*He touches his lute.*)

Hem! taken rightly, any single thing  
 The Rabbis say, implies all other things.

A knotty task, though, the unravelling  
*Meum* and *Tuum* from a saraband:  
 It needs a subtle logic, nay, perhaps,  
 A good large property, to see the thread.

*(He touches the lute again.)*

There's more of odd than even in this world,  
 Else pretty sinners would not be let off  
 Sooner than ugly; for if honeycombs  
 Are to be got by stealing, they should go  
 Where life is bitterest on the tongue. And yet, —  
 Because this minx has pretty ways I wink  
 At all her tricks, though if a flat-faced lass,  
 With eyes askew, were half as bold as she,  
 I should chastise her with a hazel switch,  
 I'm a plucked peacock, — even my voice and wit  
 Without a tail! — why, any fool detects  
 The absence of your tail, but twenty fools  
 May not detect the presence of your wit.

*(He touches his lute again.)*

Well, I must coax my tail back cunningly,  
 For to run after these brown lizards, — ah!  
 I think the lizards lift their ears at this.

*(As he thrums his lute the lads and girls gradually approach: he touches it more briskly, and HINDA, advancing, begins to move arms and legs with an initiatory dancing movement, smiling coaxingly at JUAN. He suddenly stops, lays down his lute and folds his arms.)*

What, you expected a tune to dance to, eh?

HINDA, HITA, TRALLA, AND THE REST *(clapping their hands)*

Yes, yes, a tune, a tune!



## JUAN

But that is what you cannot have, my sweet brothers and sisters. The tunes are all dead, — dead as the tunes of the lark when you have plucked his wings off; dead as the song of the grasshopper when the ass has swallowed him. I can play and sing no more. Hinda has killed my tunes.

*(All cry out in consternation. HINDA gives a wail and tries to examine the lute. JUAN waves her off.)*

Understand, Señora Hinda, that the tunes are in me; they are not in the lute till I put them there. And if you cross my humour, I shall be as tuneless as a bag of wool. If the tunes are to be brought to life again, I must have my feather back.

*(HINDA kisses his hands and feet coaxingly.)*

No, no! not a note will come for coaxing. The feather, I say, the feather!

*(HINDA sorrowfully takes off the feather, and gives it to JUAN.)*

Ah, now let us see. Perhaps a tune will come.

*(He plays a measure, and the three girls begin to dance; then he suddenly stops.)*

No, the tune will not come: it wants the aigrette (*pointing to it on HINDA'S neck*).

*(HINDA, with rather less hesitation, but again sorrowfully, takes off the aigrette, and gives it to him.)*

Ha! (*he plays again, but, after rather a longer time, again stops.*) No, no; 't is the buttons are wanting, Hinda, the buttons. This tune feeds

chiefly on buttons, — a hungry tune. It wants one, two, three, four, five, six. Good!

*(After HINDA has given up the buttons, and JUAN has laid them down one by one, he begins to play again, going on longer than before, so that the dancers become excited by the movement. Then he stops.)*

Ah, Hita, it is the belt, and, Tralla, the rosettes, — both are wanting. I see the tune will not go on without them.

*(HITA and TRALLA take off the belt and rosettes, and lay them down quickly, being fired by the dancing, and eager for the music. All the articles lie by JUAN's side on the ground.)*

Good, good, my docile wild-cats! Now I think the tunes are all alive again. Now you may dance and sing too. Hinda, my little screamer, lead off with the song I taught you, and let us see if the tune will go right on from beginning to end.

*(He plays. The dance begins again, HINDA singing. All the other boys and girls join in the chorus, and all at last dance wildly.)*

SONG

*All things journey: sun and moon,  
Morning, noon, and afternoon,  
Night and all her stars:  
'Twi'xt the east and western bars  
Round they journey,  
Come and go!  
We go with them!  
For to roam and ever roam  
Is the wild Zincali's home.*

*Earth is good, the hillside breaks  
 By the ashen roots and makes  
     Hungry nostrils glad:  
 Then we run till we are mad,  
     Like the horses,  
         And we cry,  
         None shall catch us!  
 Swift winds wing us, — we are free, —  
 Drink the air, — Zincali we!*

*Falls the snow: the pine-branch split,  
 Call the fire out, see it flit,  
     Through the dry leaves run,  
 Spread and glow, and make a sun  
     In the dark tent:  
         O warm dark!  
         Warm as conies!  
 Strong fire loves us, we are warm!  
 Who shall work Zincali harm?*

*Onward journey: fires are spent;  
 Sunward, sunward! lift the tent,  
     Run before the rain,  
 Through the pass, along the plain.  
     Hurry, hurry,  
         Lift us, wind!  
         Like the horses.  
 For to roam and ever roam  
 Is the wild Zincali's home.*

*(When the dance is at its height, HINDA  
 breaks away from the rest, and dances  
 round JUAN, who is now standing. As he  
 turns a little to watch her movement, some  
 of the boys skip towards the feather,  
 aigrette, &c., snatch them up, and run*

*away, swiftly followed by HITA, TRALLA, and the rest. HINDA, as she turns again, sees them, screams, and falls in her whirling; but immediately gets up, and rushes after them, still screaming with rage.)*

JUAN

Santiago! these imps get bolder. Haha! Señora Hinda, this finishes your lesson in ethics. You have seen the advantage of giving up stolen goods. Now you see the ugliness of thieving when practised by others. That fable of mine about the tunes was excellently devised. I feel like an ancient sage instructing our lisping ancestors. My memory will descend as the Orpheus of Gypsies. But I must prepare a rod for those rascals. I'll bastinado them with prickly pears. It seems to me these needles will have a sound moral teaching in them.

*(While JUAN takes a knife from his belt, and surveys the prickly pear, HINDA returns.)*

JUAN

Pray, Señora, why do you fume? Did you want to steal my ornaments again yourself?

HINDA *(sobbing)*

No; I thought you would give them me back again.

JUAN

What, did you want the tunes to die again? Do you like finery better than dancing?

## HINDA

Oh, that was a tale; I shall tell tales too, when I want to get anything I can't steal. And I know what I will do. I shall tell the boys I've found some little foxes, and I will never say where they are till they give me back the feather!

*(She runs off again.)*

## JUAN

Hem! the disciple seems to seize the mode sooner than the matter. Teaching virtue with this prickly pear may only teach the youngsters to use a new weapon; as your teaching orthodoxy with fagots may only bring up a fashion of roasting. Dios! my remarks grow too pregnant, — my wits get a plethora by solitary feeding on the produce of my own wisdom.

*(As he puts up his knife again, HINDA comes running back, and crying, "Our Queen! our Queen!" JUAN adjusts his garments and his lute, while HINDA turns to meet FEDALMA, who wears a Moorish dress, with gold ornaments, her black hair hanging round her in plaits, a white turban on her head, a dagger by her side. She carries a scarf on her left arm, which she holds up as a shade.)*

FEDALMA *(patting HINDA's head)*

How now, wild one? You are hot and panting. Go to my tent, and help Nouna to plait reeds.

*(HINDA kisses FEDALMA's hand, and runs off. FEDALMA advances towards JUAN, who kneels to take up the edge of her cymar, and kisses it.)*



JUAN

How is it with you, lady? You look sad.

FEDALMA

Oh, I am sick at heart. The eye of day,  
 The insistent summer sun, seems pitiless,  
 Shining in all the barren crevices  
 Of weary life, leaving no shade, no dark,  
 Where I may dream that hidden waters lie;  
 As pitiless as to some shipwrecked man,  
 Who, gazing from his narrow shoal of sand  
 On the wide unspecked round of blue and blue,  
 Sees that full light is errorless despair.  
 The insects' hum that slurs the silent dark  
 Startles, and seems to cheat me, as the tread  
 Of coming footsteps cheats the midnight watcher  
 Who holds her heart and waits to hear them  
 pause,  
 And hears them never pause, but pass and die.  
 Music sweeps by me as a messenger  
 Carrying a message that is not for me.  
 The very sameness of the hills and sky  
 Is obduracy, and the lingering hours  
 Wait round me dumbly, like superfluous slaves,  
 Of whom I want naught but the secret news  
 They are forbid to tell. And, Juan, you —  
 You, too, are cruel — would be over-wise  
 In judging your friend's needs, and choose to  
 hide  
 Something I crave to know.

JUAN

I, lady?

FEDALMA

You.

## JUAN

I never had the virtue to hide aught,  
 Save what a man is whipped for publishing.  
 I'm no more reticent than the voluble air, —  
 Dote on disclosure, — never could contain  
 The latter half of all my sentences,  
 But for the need to utter the beginning.  
 My lust to tell is so importunate  
 That it abridges every other vice,  
 And makes me temperate for want of time.  
 I dull sensation in the haste to say  
 'T is this or that, and choke report with surmise.  
 Judge, then, dear lady, if I could be mute  
 When but a glance of yours had bid me speak.

## FEDALMA

Nay, sing such falsities! — you mock me worse  
 By speech that gravely seems to ask belief.  
 You are but babbling in a part you play  
 To please my father. Oh, 't is well meant, say  
 you, —  
 Pity for woman's weakness. Take my thanks.

## JUAN

Thanks angrily bestowed are red-hot coin  
 Burning your servant's palm.

## FEDALMA

Deny it not,  
 You know how many leagues this camp of ours  
 Lies from Bedmár, — what mountains lie be-  
 tween, —  
 Could tell me if you would about the Duke, —  
 That he is comforted, sees how he gains

By losing the Zincola, finds how slight  
 The thread Fedalma made in that rich web,  
 A Spanish noble's life. No, that is false!  
 He never would think lightly of our love.  
 Some evil has befallen him, — he 's slain, —  
 Has sought for danger and has beckoned death  
 Because I made all life seem treachery.  
 Tell me the worst, — be merciful, — no worst,  
 Against the hideous painting of my fear,  
 Would not show like a better.

JUAN

If I speak,

Will you believe your slave? For truth is scant;  
 And where the appetite is still to hear  
 And not believe, falsehood would stint it less.  
 How say you? Does your hunger's fancy choose  
 The meagre fact?

FEDALMA (*seating herself on the ground*)

Yes, yes, the truth, dear Juan.  
 Sit now, and tell me all.

JUAN

That all is naught.

I can unleash my fancy if you wish  
 And hunt for phantoms: shoot an airy guess  
 And bring down airy likelihood, — some lie  
 Masked cunningly to look like royal truth  
 And cheat the shooter, while King Fact goes free,  
 Or else some image of reality  
 That doubt will handle and reject as false.  
 Ask for conjecture, — I can thread the sky  
 Like any swallow, but, if you insist,  
 On knowledge that would guide a pair of feet

Right to Bedmár, across the Moorish bounds,  
A mule that dreams of stumbling over stones  
Is better stored.

## FEDALMA

And you have gathered naught  
About the border wars? No news, no hint  
Of any rumours that concern the Duke, —  
Rumours kept from me by my father?

## JUAN

None.

Your father trusts no secrets to the echoes.  
Of late his movements have been hid from all  
Save those few hundred picked Zincali breasts  
He carries with him. Think you he's a man  
To let his projects slip from out his belt,  
Then whisper him who haps to find them strayed  
To be so kind as keep his counsel well?  
Why, if he found me knowing aught too much,  
He would straight gag or strangle me, and say,  
"Poor hound! it was a pity that his bark  
Could chance to mar my plans: he loved my  
daughter, —  
The idle hound had naught to do but love,  
So followed to the battle and got crushed."

FEDALMA (*holding out her hand, which JUAN  
kisses*)

Good Juan, I could have no nobler friend.  
You'd ope your veins and let your life-blood out  
To save another's pain, yet hide the deed  
With jesting, — say, 't was merest accident,  
A sportive scratch that went by chance too deep, —  
And die content with men's slight thought of you,  
Finding your glory in another's joy.

## JUAN

Dub not my likings virtues, lest they get  
A drug-like taste, and breed a nausea.  
Honey's not sweet, commended as cathartic.  
Such names are parchment labels upon gems  
Hiding their colour. What is lovely seen  
Priced in a tariff? — lapis lazuli,  
Such bulk, so many drachmas: amethysts  
Quoted at so much; sapphires higher still.  
The stone like solid heaven in its blueness  
Is what I care for, not its name or price.  
So, if I live or die to serve my friend  
'T is for my love — 't is for my friend alone,  
And not for any rate that friendship bears  
In heaven or on earth. Nay, I romance, —  
I talk of Roland and the ancient peers.  
In me 't is hardly friendship, only lack  
Of a substantial self that holds a weight;  
So I kiss larger things and roll with them.

## FEDALMA

Nay, you will never hide your soul from me;  
I've seen the jewel's flash, and know 't is there,  
Muffle it as you will. That foam-like talk  
Will not wash out a fear which blots the good  
Your presence brings me. Oft I'm pierced afresh  
Through all the pressure of my selfish griefs  
By thought of you. It was a rash resolve  
Made you disclose yourself when you kept watch  
About the terrace wall: — your pity leaped  
Seeing my ills alone and not your loss,  
Self-doomed to exile. Juan, you must repent.  
'T is not in nature that resolve, which feeds  
On strenuous actions, should not pine and die  
In these long days of empty listlessness.



## JUAN

Repent? Not I. Repentance is the weight  
 Of indigested meals eat yesterday.  
 'T is for large animals that gorge on prey,  
 Not for a honey-sipping butterfly.  
 I am a thing of rhythm and redondillas, —  
 The momentary rainbow on the spray  
 Made by the thundering torrent of men's lives:  
 No matter whether I am here or there;  
 I still catch sunbeams. And in Africa,  
 Where melons and all fruits, they say, grow large,  
 Fables are real, and the apes polite,  
 A poet, too, may prosper past belief:  
 I shall grow epic, like the Florentine,  
 And sing the founding of our infant state,  
 Sing the Zincalo's Carthage.

## FEDALMA

Africa!

Would we were there! Under another heaven,  
 In lands where neither love nor memory  
 Can plant a selfish hope, — in lands so far  
 I should not seem to see the outstretched arms  
 That seek me, or to hear the voice that calls.  
 I should feel distance only and despair;  
 So rest forever from the thought of bliss,  
 And wear my weight of life's great chain unstrug-  
 gling.  
 Juan, if I could know he would forget, —  
 Nay, not forget, forgive me, — be content  
 That I forsook him for no joy, but sorrow;  
 For sorrow chosen rather than a joy  
 That destiny made base! Then he would taste  
 No bitterness in sweet, sad memory,  
 And I should live unblemished in his thought,

Hallowed like her who dies an unwed bride.  
 Our words have wings, but fly not where we would.  
 Could mine but reach him, Juan!

## JUAN

Speak but the wish, —  
 My feet have wings, — I 'll be your Mercury.  
 I fear no shadowed perils by the way.  
 No man will wear the sharpness of his sword  
 On me. Nay, I 'm a herald of the Muse,  
 Sacred for Moors and Spaniards. I will go, —  
 Will fetch you tidings for an amulet.  
 But stretch not hope too strongly towards that mark  
 As issue of my wandering. Given, I cross  
 Safely the Moorish border, reach Bedmár:  
 Fresh counsels may prevail there, and the Duke  
 Being absent in the field, I may be trapped.  
 Men who are sour at missing larger game  
 May wing a chattering sparrow for revenge.  
 It is a chance no further worth the note  
 Than as a warning, lest you feared worse ill  
 If my return were stayed. I might be caged;  
 They would not harm me else. Untimely death,  
 The red auxiliary of the skeleton,  
 Has too much work on hand to think of me;  
 Or, if he cares to slay me, I shall fall  
 Choked with a grape-stone for economy.  
 The likelier chance is that I go and come,  
 Bringing you comfort back.

FEDALMA (*starts from her seat and walks to a little distance, standing a few moments with her back towards JUAN, then she turns round quickly, and goes towards him*)

No, Juan, no!  
 Those yearning words come from a soul infirm,

Crying and struggling at the pain of bonds  
 Which yet it would not loosen. He knows all, —  
 All that he needs to know: I said farewell:  
 I stepped across the cracking earth and knew  
 'T would yawn behind me. I must walk right on.  
 No, Juan, I will win naught by risking you:  
 The possible loss would poison hope. Besides,  
 'T were treachery in me: my father wills  
 That we — all here — should rest within this camp.  
 If I can never live, like him, on faith  
 In glorious morrows, I am resolute.  
 While he treads painfully with stillest step  
 And beady brow, pressed 'neath the weight of arms,  
 Shall I, to ease my fevered restlessness,  
 Raise peevish moans, shattering that fragile silence?  
 No! On the close-thronged spaces of the earth  
 A battle rages: Fate has carried me  
 'Mid the thick arrows: I will keep my stand, —  
 Not shrink and let the shaft pass by my breast  
 To pierce another. Oh, 't is written large  
 The thing I have to do. But you, dear Juan,  
 Renounce, endure, are brave, unurged by aught  
 Save the sweet overflow of your good will.

*(She seats herself again.)*

### JUAN

Nay, I endure naught worse than napping sheep,  
 When nimble birds uproot a fleecy lock  
 To line their nest with. See! your bondsman,  
 Queen,  
 The minstrel of your court, is featherless;  
 Deforms your presence by a moulting garb;  
 Shows like a roadside bush culled of its buds.  
 Yet, if your graciousness will not disdain  
 A poor plucked songster, — shall he sing to you?

Some lay of afternoons, — some ballad strain  
Of those who ached once but are sleeping now  
Under the sun-warmed flowers? 'T will cheat the  
time.

FEDALMA

Thanks, Juan, later, when this hour is passed.  
My soul is clogged with self; it could not float  
On with the pleasing sadness of your song.  
Leave me in this green spot, but come again, —  
Come with the lengthening shadows.

JUAN

Then your slave  
Will go to chase the robbers. Queen, farewell!

FEDALMA

Best friend, my well-spring in the wilderness!

[While Juan sped along the stream, there came  
From the dark tents a ringing joyous shout  
That thrilled Fedalma with a summons grave  
Yet welcome too. Straightway she rose and  
stood,

All languor banished, with a soul suspense  
Like one who waits high presence, listening.  
Was it a message, or her father's self  
That made the camp so glad?

It was himself!

She saw him now advancing, girt with arms  
That seemed like idle trophies hung for show  
Beside the weight and fire of living strength  
That made his frame. He glanced with absent  
triumph,

As one who conquers in some field afar

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And bears off unseen spoil. But nearing her,  
His terrible eyes intense sent forth new rays, —  
A sudden sunshine where the lightning was  
'Twixt meeting dark. All tenderly he laid  
His hand upon her shoulder; tenderly,  
His kiss upon her brow.]

ZARCA

My royal daughter!

FEDALMA

Father, I joy to see your safe return.

ZARCA

Nay, I but stole the time, as hungry men  
Steal from the morrow's meal, made a forced  
march,  
Left Hassan as my watch-dog, all to see  
My daughter, and to feed her famished hope  
With news of promise.

FEDALMA

Is the task achieved  
That was to be the herald of our flight?

ZARCA

Not outwardly, but to my inward vision  
Things are achieved when they are well begun.  
The perfect archer calls the deer his own  
While yet the shaft is whistling. His keen eye  
Never sees failure, sees the mark alone.  
You have heard naught, then,—had no messenger?



FEDALMA

I, father? no: each quiet day has fled  
 Like the same moth, returning with slow wing,  
 And pausing in the sunshine.

ZARCA

It is well.  
 You shall not long count days in weariness.  
 Ere the full moon has waned again to new,  
 We shall reach Almería: Berber ships  
 Will take us for their freight, and we shall go  
 With plenteous spoil, not stolen, bravely won  
 By service done on Spaniards. Do you shrink?  
 Are you aught less than a Zincala?

FEDALMA

No;  
 But I am more. The Spaniards fostered me.

ZARCA

They stole you first, and reared you for the flames.  
 I found you, rescued you, that you might live  
 A true Zincala's life; else you were doomed.  
 Your bridal bed had been the rack.

FEDALMA (*in a low tone*)

They meant —  
 To seize me? — ere he came?

ZARCA

Yes, I know all.  
 They found your chamber empty.

FEDALMA (*eagerly*)

Then you know, —  
 (*Checking herself.*)

Father, my soul would be less laggard, fed  
 With fuller trust.

## ZARCA

My daughter, I must keep  
 The Arab's secret. Arabs are our friends,  
 Grappling for life with Christians who lay waste  
 Granada's valleys, and with devilish hoofs  
 Trample the young green corn, with devilish play  
 Fell blossomed trees, and tear up well-pruned  
 vines:

Cruel as tigers to the vanquished brave,  
 They wring out gold by oaths they mean to break;  
 Take pay for pity and are pitiless;  
 Then tinkle bells above the desolate earth,  
 And praise their monstrous gods, supposed to love  
 The flattery of liars. I will strike  
 The full-gorged dragon. You, my child, must  
 watch

The battle with a heart, not fluttering  
 But duteous, firm-weighted by resolve,  
 Choosing between two lives, like her who holds  
 A dagger which must pierce one of two breasts,  
 And one of them her father's. Nay, you divine, —  
 I speak not closely, but in parables;  
 Put one for many.

FEDALMA (*collecting herself, and looking firmly  
 at ZARCA*)

Then it is your will  
 That I ask nothing?

## ZARCA

You shall know enough  
To trace the sequence of the seed and flower.  
El Zagal trusts me, rates my counsel high:  
He, knowing I have won a grant of lands  
Within the Berber's realm, wills me to be  
The tongue of his good cause in Africa,  
So gives us furtherance in our pilgrimage  
For service hoped, as well as service done  
In that great feat of which I am the eye,  
And my three hundred Gypsies the best arm.  
More, I am charged by other noble Moors  
With messages of weight to Telemsán.  
Ha, your eye flashes. Are you glad?

## FEDALMA

Yes, glad  
That men are forced to honour a Zincalo.

## ZARCA

Oh, fighting for dear life men choose their swords  
For cutting only, not for ornament.  
What naught but Nature gives, man takes per-  
force  
Where she bestows it, though in vilest place.  
Can he compress invention out of pride,  
Make heirship do the work of muscle, sail  
Towards great discoveries with a pedigree?  
Sick men ask cures, and Nature serves not hers  
Daintily as a feast. A blacksmith once  
Founded a dynasty and raised on high  
The leathern apron over armies spread  
Between the mountains like a lake of steel.

FEDALMA (*bitterly*)

To be contemned, then, is fair augury.  
That pledge of future good at least is ours.

## ZARCA

Let men contemn us: 't is such blind contempt  
That leaves the wingéd broods to thrive in warmth  
Unheeded, till they fill the air like storms.  
So we shall thrive, — still darkly shall draw force  
Into a new and multitudinous life  
That likeness fashions to community,  
Mother divine of customs, faith, and laws.  
'T is ripeness, 't is fame's zenith that kills hope.  
Huge oaks are dying, forests yet to come  
Lie in the twigs and rotten-seeming seeds.

## FEDALMA

And our Zincali? Under their poor husk  
Do you discern such seed? You said our band  
Was the best arm of some hard enterprise;  
They give out sparks of virtue, then, and show  
There 's metal in their earth?

## ZARCA

Ay, metal fine

In my brave Gypsies. Not the lithest Moor  
Has lither limbs for scaling, keener eye  
To mark the meaning of the farthest speck  
That tells of change; and they are disciplined  
By faith in me, to such obedience  
As needs no spy. My scalers and my scouts  
Are to the Moorish force they 're leagued withal  
As bow-string to the bow; while I their chief  
Command the enterprise and guide the will

Of Moorish captains, as the pilot guides  
 With eye-instructed hand the passive helm.  
 For high device is still the highest force,  
 And he who holds the secret of the wheel  
 May make the rivers do what work he would.  
 With thoughts impalpable we clutch men's souls,  
 Weaken the joints of armies, make them fly  
 Like dust and leaves before the viewless wind.  
 Tell me what's mirrored in the tiger's heart,  
 I'll rule that too.

FEDALMA (*wrought to a glow of admiration*)

O my imperial father!  
 'T is where there breathes a mighty soul like yours  
 That men's contempt is of good augury.

ZARCA (*seizing both FEDALMA's hands, and looking at her searchingly*)

And you, my daughter, are you not the child  
 Of the Zinalo? Does not his great hope  
 Thrill in your veins like shouts of victory?  
 'T is a vile life that like a garden pool  
 Lies stagnant in the round of personal loves;  
 That has no ear save for the tickling lute  
 Set to small measures, — deaf to all the beats  
 Of that large music rolling o'er the world:  
 A miserable, petty, low-roofed life,  
 That knows the mighty orbits of the skies  
 Through naught save light or dark in its own cabin.  
 The very brutes will feel the force of kind  
 And move together, gathering a new soul, —  
 The soul of multitudes. Say now, my child,  
 You will not falter, not look back and long  
 For unfledged ease in some soft alien nest.  
 The crane with outspread wing that heads the file



Pauses not, feels no backward impulses:  
 Behind it summer was, and is no more;  
 Before it lies the summer it will reach  
 Or fall in the mid-ocean. And you no less  
 Must feel the force sublime of growing life.  
 New thoughts are urgent as the growth of wings;  
 The widening vision is imperious  
 As higher members bursting the worm's sheath.  
 You cannot grovel in the worm's delights:  
 You must take wingéd pleasures, wingéd pains.  
 Are you not steadfast? Will you live or die  
 For aught below your royal heritage?  
 To him who holds the flickering brief torch  
 That lights a beacon for the perishing,  
 Aught else is crime. Are you a false Zincola?

## FEDALMA

Father, my soul is weak, the mist of tears  
 Still rises to my eyes, and hides the goal  
 Which to your undimmed sight is clear and change-  
 less.  
 But if I cannot plant resolve on hope  
 It will stand firm on certainty of woe.  
 I choose the ill that is most like to end  
 With my poor being. Hopes have precarious life.  
 They are oft blighted, withered, snapped sheer off  
 In vigorous growth and turned to rottenness.  
 But faithfulness can feed on suffering,  
 And knows no disappointment. Trust in me!  
 If it were needed, this poor trembling hand  
 Should grasp the torch, — strive not to let it fall  
 Though it were burning down close to my flesh,  
 No beacon lighted yet: through the damp dark  
 I should still hear the cry of gasping swimmers.  
 Father, I will be true!

## ZARCA

I trust that word.

And, for your sadness, — you are young, — the  
bruise

Will leave no mark. The worst of misery  
Is when a nature framed for noblest things  
Condemns itself in youth to petty joys,  
And, sore athirst for air, breathes scanty life  
Gasping from out the shallows. You are saved  
From such poor doubleness. The life we choose  
Breathes high, and sees a full-arched firmament.  
Our deeds shall speak like rock-hewn messages,  
Teaching great purpose to the distant time.  
Now I must hasten back. I shall but speak  
To Nadar of the order he must keep  
In setting watch and victualling. The stars  
And the young moon must see me at my post.  
Nay, rest you here. Farewell, my younger self, —  
Strong-hearted daughter! Shall I live in you  
When the earth covers me?

## FEDALMA

My father, death  
Should give your will divineness, make it strong  
With the beseechings of a mighty soul  
That left its work unfinished. Kiss me now:

*(They embrace, and she adds tremulously as  
they part,)*

And when you see fair hair be pitiful.

[*Exit ZARCA.*

*(FEDALMA seats herself on the bank, leans  
her head forward, and covers her face with  
her drapery. While she is seated thus,*

*HINDA comes from the bank, with a branch of musk roses in her hand. Seeing FEDALMA with head bent and covered, she pauses, and begins to move on tiptoe.)*

## HINDA

Our Queen! Can she be crying? There she sits  
As I did every day when my dog Saad  
Sickened and yelled, and seemed to yell so loud  
After we 'd buried him, I oped his grave.

*(She comes forward on tiptoe, kneels at FEDALMA'S feet, and embraces them. FEDALMA uncovers her head.)*

## FEDALMA

Hinda! what is it?

## HINDA

Queen, a branch of roses, —  
So sweet, you 'll love to smell them. 'T was the  
last.

I climbed the bank to get it before Tralla,  
And slipped and scratched my arm. But I don't  
mind.

You love the roses, — so do I. I wish  
The sky would rain down roses, as they rain  
From off the shaken bush. Why will it not?  
Then all the valley would be pink and white  
And soft to tread on. They would fall as light  
As feathers, smelling sweet; and it would be  
Like sleeping and yet waking, all at once!  
Over the sea, Queen, where we soon shall go,  
Will it rain roses?

FEDALMA

No, my prattler, no!  
It never will rain roses: when we want  
To have more roses we must plant more trees.  
But you want nothing, little one, — the world  
Just suits you as it suits the tawny squirrels.  
Come, you want nothing.

HINDA

Yes, I want more berries, —  
Red ones, — to wind about my neck and arms  
When I am married, — on my ankles too  
I want to wind red berries, and on my head.

FEDALMA

Who is it you are fond of? Tell me, now.

HINDA

O Queen, you know! It could be no one else  
But Ismaël. He catches birds, — no end!  
Knows where the speckled fish are, scales the rocks  
And sings and dances with me when I like.  
How should I marry and not marry him?

FEDALMA

Should you have loved him, had he been a Moor,  
Or white Castilian?

HINDA (*starting to her feet, then kneeling again*)

Are you angry, Queen?  
Say why you will think shame of your poor Hinda?  
She 'd sooner be a rat and hang on thorns  
To parch until the wind had scattered her,  
Than be an outcast, spit at by her tribe.

## FEDALMA

Hinda, I know you are a good Zincala.  
 But would you part from Ismaël? leave him now  
 If your chief bade you, — said it was for good  
 To all your tribe that you must part from him?

HINDA (*giving a sharp cry*)

Ah, will he say so?

FEDALMA (*almost fierce in her earnestness*)

Nay, child, answer me.  
 Could you leave Ismaël? get into a boat  
 And see the waters widen 'twixt you two  
 Till all was water and you saw him not,  
 And knew that you would never see him more?  
 If 't was your chief's command, and if he said  
 Your tribe would all be slaughtered, die of plague,  
 Of famine, — madly drink each other's blood . . . .

HINDA (*trembling*)

O Queen, if it is so, tell Ismaël.

FEDALMA

You would obey, then? part from him forever?

HINDA

How could we live else? With our brethren  
 lost? —  
 No marriage feast? The day would turn to dark.  
 Zincali cannot live without their tribe.  
 I must obey! Poor Ismaël — poor Hinda!  
 But will it ever be so cold and dark?  
 Oh, I would sit upon the rocks and cry,  
 And cry so long that I could cry no more:  
 Then I should go to sleep.



## FEDALMA

No, Hinda, no!  
Thou never shalt be called to part from him.  
I will have berries for thee, red and black,  
And I will be so glad to see thee glad,  
That earth will seem to hold enough of joy  
To outweigh all the pangs of those who part.  
Be comforted, bright eyes. See, I will tie  
These roses in a crown, for thee to wear.

HINDA (*clapping her hands, while FEDALMA puts  
the roses on her head*)

Oh, I'm as glad as many little foxes, —  
I will find Ismaël, and tell him all. (*She runs off.*)

FEDALMA (*alone*)

She has the strength I lack. Within her world  
The dial has not stirred since first she woke:  
No changing light has made the shadows die,  
And taught her trusting soul sad difference.  
For her, good, right, and law are all summed up  
In what is possible; life is one web  
Where love, joy, kindred, and obedience  
Lie fast and even, in one warp and woof  
With thirst and drinking, hunger, food, and sleep.  
She knows no struggles, sees no double path:  
Her fate is freedom, for her will is one  
With the Zincalo's law, the only law  
She ever knew. For me — oh, I have fire within,  
But on my will there falls the chilling snow  
Of thoughts that come as subtly as soft flakes,  
Yet press at last with hard and icy weight.  
I could be firm, could give myself the wrench  
And walk erect, hiding my life-long wound,

If I but saw the fruit of all my pain  
 With that strong vision which commands the soul,  
 And makes great awe the monarch of desire.  
 But now I totter, seeing no far goal:  
 I tread the rocky pass, and pause and grasp,  
 Guided by flashes. When my father comes,  
 And breathes into my soul his generous hope, —  
 By his own greatness making life seem great,  
 As the clear heavens bring sublimity,  
 And show earth larger, spanned by that blue  
 vast, —

Resolve is strong: I can embrace my sorrow,  
 Nor nicely weigh the fruit; possessed with need  
 Solely to do the noblest, though it failed, —  
 Though lava streamed upon my breathing deed  
 And buried it in night and barrenness.

But soon the glow dies out, the warrior's music  
 That vibrated as strength through all my limbs  
 Is heard no longer; over the wide scene  
 There's naught but chill gray silence, or the hum  
 And fitful discord of a vulgar world.

Then I sink helpless, — sink into the arms  
 Of all sweet memories, and dream of bliss:  
 See looks that penetrate like tones; hear tones  
 That flash looks with them. Even now I feel  
 Soft airs enwrap me, as if yearning rays  
 Of some far presence touched me with their  
 warmth

And brought a tender murmuring. . . .

[While she mused,  
 A figure came from out the olive-trees  
 That bent close-whispering 'twixt the parted hills  
 Beyond the crescent of thick cactus: paused  
 At sight of her; then slowly forward moved  
 With careful step, and gently said, "FEDALMA!"

Fearing lest fancy had enslaved her sense,  
 She quivered, rose, but turned not. Soon again:  
 "FEDALMA, it is SILVA!" Then she turned.  
 He, with bared head and arms entreating beamed  
 Like morning on her. Vision held her still  
 One moment, then with gliding motion swift,  
 Inevitable as the melting stream's,  
 She found her rest within his circling arms.]

FEDALMA

O love, you are living, and believe in me!

DON SILVA

Once more we are together. Wishing dies, —  
 Stifled with bliss.

FEDALMA

You did not hate me, then, —  
 Think me an ingrate, — think my love was small  
 That I forsook you?

DON SILVA

Dear, I trusted you  
 As holy men trust God. You could do naught  
 That was not pure and loving, — though the deed  
 Might pierce me unto death. You had less trust,  
 Since you suspected mine. 'T was wicked doubt.

FEDALMA

Nay, when I saw you hating me the fault  
 Seemed in my lot, — the poor Zincala's, — her  
 On whom you lavished all your wealth of love  
 As price of naught but sorrow. Then I said,  
 "'T is better so. He will be happier!"  
 But soon that thought, struggling to be a hope,  
 Would end in tears.

DON SILVA

It was a cruel thought.  
 Happier! True misery is not begun  
 Until I cease to love thee.

FEDALMA

Silva!

DON SILVA

Mine!

*(They stand a moment or two in silence.)*

FEDALMA

I thought I had so much to tell you, love, —  
 Long eloquent stories, — how it all befell, —  
 The solemn message, calling me away  
 To awful spousals, where my own dead joy,  
 A conscious ghost, looked on and saw me wed.

DON SILVA

Oh that grave speech would cumber our quick souls  
 Like bells that waste the moments with their loud-  
 ness.

FEDALMA

And if it all were said, 't would end in this,  
 That I still loved you when I fled away.  
 'T is no more wisdom than the little birds  
 Make known by their soft twitter when they feel  
 Each other's heart beat.

DON SILVA

All the deepest things  
 We now say with our eyes and meeting pulse:  
 Our voices need but prattle.

FEDALMA

I forget

All the drear days of thirst in this one draught.

*(Again they are silent for a few moments.)*But tell me how you came? Where are your  
guards?Is there no risk? And now I look at you,  
This garb is strange . . .

DON SILVA

I came alone.

FEDALMA

Alone?

DON SILVA

Yes, — fled in secret. There was no way else  
To find you safely.FEDALMA *(letting one hand fall and moving a  
little from him with a look of sudden terror,  
while he clasps her more firmly by the other  
arm).*

Silva!

DON SILVA

It is naught.

Enough that I am here. Now we will cling.  
What power shall hinder us? You left me once  
To set your father free. That task is done,  
And you are mine again. I have braved all  
That I might find you, see your father, win  
His furtherance in bearing you away  
To some safe refuge. Are we not betrothed?



## FEDALMA

Oh, I am trembling 'neath the rush of thoughts  
That come like griefs at morning, — look at me  
With awful faces, from the vanishing haze  
That momentarily had hidden them.

## DON SILVA

What thoughts?

## FEDALMA

Forgotten burials. There lies a grave  
Between this visionary present and the past.  
Our joy is dead, and only smiles on us  
A loving shade from out the place of tombs.

## DON SILVA

Fedalma, your love faints, else aught that parts us  
Would seem but superstition. Love supreme  
Defies all sophistry, — risks avenging fires.  
I have risked all things. But your love is faint.

FEDALMA (*retreating a little, but keeping his hand*)

Silva, if now between us came a sword,  
Severed my arm, and left our two hands clasped,  
This poor maimed arm would feel the clasp till  
death.

What parts us is a sword . . .

(*ZARCA has been advancing in the back-ground. He has drawn his sword, and now thrusts the naked blade between them. SILVA lets go FEDALMA'S hand, and grasps his sword. FEDALMA, startled at first, stands firmly, as if prepared to interpose between her father and the Duke.*)

## ZARCA

Ay, 't is a sword

That parts the Spanish noble and the true Zincala:  
 A sword that was baptized in Christian blood,  
 When once a band, cloaking with Spanish law  
 Their brutal rapine, would have butchered us,  
 And then outraged our women.

*(Resting the point of his sword on the ground)*

My lord Duke,

I was a guest within your fortress once  
 Against my will; had entertainment too, —  
 Much like a galley slave's. Pray, have you  
     sought  
 The poor Zincalo's camp, to find return  
 For that Castilian courtesy? or rather  
 To make amends for all our prisoned toil  
 By this great honour of your unasked presence?

## DON SILVA

Chief, I have brought no scorn to meet your  
     scorn.  
 I came because love urged me, — that deep love  
 I bear to her whom you call daughter, — her  
 Whom I reclaim as my betrothed bride.

## ZARCA

Doubtless you bring for final argument  
 Your men-at-arms who will escort your bride?

## DON SILVA

I came alone. The only force I bring  
 Is tenderness. Nay, I will trust besides  
 In all the pleadings of a father's care  
 To wed his daughter as her nurture bids.

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And for your tribe, — whatever purposed good  
Your thoughts may cherish, I will make secure  
With the strong surety of a noble's power:  
My wealth shall be your treasury.

ZARCA (*with irony*)

My thanks!

To me you offer liberal price; for her  
Your love's beseeching will be force supreme.  
She will go with you as a willing slave,  
Will give a word of parting to her father,  
Wave farewells to her tribe, then turn and say:  
" Now, my lord, I am nothing but your bride;  
I am quite culled, have neither root nor trunk,  
Now wear me with your plume!"

DON SILVA

Yours is the wrong

Feigning in me one thought of her below  
The highest homage. I would make my rank  
The pedestal of her worth; a noble's sword,  
A noble's honour, her defence; his love  
The life-long sanctuary of her womanhood.

ZARCA

I tell you, were you King of Aragon,  
And won my daughter's hand, your higher rank  
Would blacken her dishonour. 'T were excuse  
If you were beggared, homeless, spit upon,  
And so made even with her people's lot;  
For then she would be lured by want, not wealth,  
To be a wife amongst an alien race  
To whom her tribe owes curses.

## DON SILVA

Such blind hate

Is fit for beasts of prey, but not for men.  
 My hostile acts against you should but count  
 As ignorant strokes against a friend unknown;  
 And for the wrongs inflicted on your tribe  
 By Spanish edicts or the cruelty  
 Of Spanish vassals, am I criminal?  
 Love comes to cancel all ancestral hate,  
 Subdues all heritage, proves that in mankind  
 Union is deeper than division.

## ZARCA

.Ay,

Such love is common: I have seen it oft, —  
 Seen many women rend the sacred ties  
 That bind them in high fellowship with men,  
 Making them mothers of a people's virtue;  
 Seen them so levelled to a handsome steed  
 That yesterday was Moorish property,  
 To-day is Christian, — wears new-fashioned gear,  
 Neighs to new feeders, and will prance alike  
 Under all banners, so the banner be  
 A master's who caresses. Such light change  
 You call conversion; we Zincali call  
 Conversion infamy. Our people's faith  
 Is faithfulness; not the rote-learned belief  
 That we are heaven's highest favourites,  
 But the resolve that, being most forsaken  
 Among the sons of men, we will be true  
 Each to the other, and our common lot.  
 You Christians burn men for their heresy:  
 Our vilest heretic is that Zincala  
 Who, choosing ease, forsakes her people's woes.  
 The dowry of my daughter is to be

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Chief woman of her tribe, and rescue it.  
 A bride with such a dowry has no match  
 Among the subjects of that Catholic Queen  
 Who would have Gypsies swept into the sea  
 Or else would have them gibbeted.

DON SILVA

And you,

Fedalma's father, — you who claim the dues  
 Of fatherhood, — will offer up her youth  
 To mere grim idols of your fantasy!  
 Worse than all Pagans, with no oracle  
 To bid you murder, no sure good to win,  
 Will sacrifice your daughter, — to no god,  
 But to a hungry fire within your soul,  
 Mad hopes, blind hate, that like possessing fiends  
 Shriek at a name! This sweetest virgin, reared  
 As garden flowers, to give the sordid world  
 Glimpses of perfectness, you snatch and thrust  
 On dreary wilds; in visions mad, proclaim  
 Semiramis of Gypsy wanderers;  
 Doom, with a broken arrow in her heart,  
 To wait for death 'mid squalid savages:  
 For what? You would be saviour of your tribe;  
 So said Fedalma's letter; rather say,  
 You have the will to save by ruling men,  
 But first to rule; and with that flinty will  
 You cut your way, though the first cut you give  
 Gash your child's bosom.

*(While SILVA has been speaking, with growing passion, FEDALMA has placed herself between him and her father.)*

ZARCA (*with calm irony*)

You are loud, my lord!

You only are the reasonable man;



You have a heart, I none. Fedalma's good  
Is what you see, you care for; while I seek  
No good, not even my own, urged on by naught  
But hellish hunger, which must still be fed  
Though in the feeding it I suffer throes.  
Fume at your own opinion as you will:  
I speak not now to you, but to my daughter.  
If she still calls it good to mate with you,  
To be a Spanish duchess, kneel at court,  
And hope her beauty is excuse to men  
When women whisper, "She was a Zincala;"  
If she still calls it good to take a lot  
That measures joy for her as she forgets  
Her kindred and her kindred's misery,  
Nor feels the softness of her downy couch  
Marred by remembrance that she once forsook  
The place that she was born to, — let her go!  
If life for her still lies in alien love,  
That forces her to shut her soul from truth  
As men in shameful pleasures shut out day;  
And death, for her, is to do rarest deeds,  
Which, even failing, leave new faith to men,  
The faith in human hearts, — then, let her go!  
She is my only offspring; in her veins  
She bears the blood her tribe has trusted in;  
Her heritage is their obedience,  
And if I died, she might still lead them forth  
To plant the race her lover now reviles  
Where they may make a nation, and may rise  
To grander manhood than his race can show;  
Then live a goddess, sanctifying oaths,  
Enforcing right, and ruling consciences,  
By law deep-graven in exalting deeds,  
Through the long ages of her people's life.  
If she can leave that lot for silken shame,  
For kisses honeyed by oblivion, —

The bliss of drunkards or the blank of fools, —  
 Then let her go! You Spanish Catholics,  
 When you are cruel, base, and treacherous,  
 For ends not pious, tender gifts to God,  
 And for men's wounds offer much oil to churches:  
 We have no altars for such healing gifts  
 As soothe the heavens for outrage done on earth.  
 We have no priesthood and no creed to teach  
 That the Zincala who might save her race  
 And yet abandons it, may cleanse that blot,  
 And mend the curse her life has been to men,  
 By saving her own soul. Her one base choice  
 Is wrong unchangeable, is poison shed  
 Where men must drink shed by her poisoning will.  
 Now choose, Fedalma!

[But her choice was made.  
 Slowly, while yet her father spoke, she moved  
 From where oblique with deprecating arms  
 She stood between the two who swayed her heart:  
 Slowly she moved to choose sublimer pain;  
 Yearning, yet shrinking; wrought upon by awe,  
 Her own brief life seeming a little isle  
 Remote through visions of a wider world  
 With fates close-crowded; firm to slay her joy  
 That cut her heart with smiles beneath the knife,  
 Like a sweet babe foredoomed by prophecy.  
 She stood apart, yet near her father: stood  
 Hand clutching hand, her limbs all tense with will  
 That strove against her anguish, eyes that seemed  
 a soul  
 Yearning in death towards him she loved and left.  
 He faced her, pale with passion and a will  
 Fierce to resist whatever might seem strong  
 And ask him to submit: he saw one end, —  
 He must be conqueror; monarch of his lot

And not its tributary. But she spoke  
Tenderly, pleadingly.]

## FEDALMA

My lord, farewell!  
'T was well we met once more; now we must part.  
I think we had the chief of all love's joys  
Only in knowing that we loved each other.

## DON SILVA

I thought we loved with love that clings till death,  
Clings as brute mothers bleeding to their young,  
Still sheltering, clutching it, though it were dead;  
Taking the death-wound sooner than divide.  
I thought we loved so.

## FEDALMA

Silva, it is fate.  
Great Fate has made me heiress of this woe.  
You must forgive Fedalma all her debt:  
She is quite beggared: if she gave herself,  
'T would be a self corrupt with stifled thoughts  
Of a forsaken better. It is truth  
My father speaks: the Spanish noble's wife  
Would be a false Zincala. I will bear  
The heavy trust of my inheritance.  
See, 't was my people's life that throbbed in me;  
An unknown need stirred darkly in my soul,  
And made me restless even in my bliss.  
Oh, all my bliss was in our love; but now  
I may not taste it: some deep energy  
Compels me to choose hunger. Dear, farewell!  
I must go with my people.

[She stretched forth

Her tender hands, that oft had lain in his,  
 The hands he knew so well, that sight of them  
 Seemed like their touch. But he stood still as  
 death;

Locked motionless by forces opposite:  
 His frustrate hopes still battled with despair;  
 His will was prisoner to the double grasp  
 Of rage and hesitancy. All the travelled way  
 Behind him, he had trodden confident,  
 Ruling munificently in his thought  
 This Gypsy father. Now the father stood  
 Present and silent and unchangeable  
 As a celestial portent. Backward lay  
 The traversed road, the town's forsaken wall,  
 The risk, the daring; all around him now  
 Was obstacle, save where the rising flood  
 Of love close pressed by anguish of denial  
 Was sweeping him resistless; save where she  
 Gazing stretched forth her tender hands, that  
 hurt  
 Like parting kisses. Then at last he spoke.]

#### DON SILVA

No, I can never take those hands in mine,  
 Then let them go forever!

#### FEDALMA

It must be.  
 We may not make this world a paradise  
 By walking it together hand in hand,  
 With eyes that meeting feed a double strength.  
 We must be only joined by pains divine  
 Of spirits blent in mutual memories.  
 Silva, our joy is dead.

DON SILVA

But love still lives,  
And has a safer guard in wretchedness.  
Fedalma, women know no perfect love:  
Loving the strong, they can forsake the strong;  
Man clings because the being whom he loves  
Is weak and needs him. I can never turn  
And leave you to your difficult wandering;  
Know that you tread the desert, bear the storm,  
Shed tears, see terrors, faint with weariness,  
Yet live away from you. I should feel naught  
But your imagined pains: in my own steps  
See your feet bleeding, taste your silent tears,  
And feel no presence but your loneliness.  
No, I will never leave you!

ZARCA

My lord Duke,  
I have been patient, given room for speech,  
Bent not to move my daughter by command,  
Save that of her own faithfulness. But now,  
All further words are idle elegies  
Unfitting times of action. You are here  
With the safe conduct of that trust you showed  
Coming alone to the Zincalo's camp.  
I would fain meet all trust with courtesy  
As well as honour; but my utmost power  
Is to afford you Gypsy guard to-night  
Within the tents that keep the northward lines,  
And for the morrow, escort on your way  
Back to the Moorish bounds.

DON SILVA

What if my words  
Were meant for deeds, decisive as a leap



Into the current? It is not my wont  
 To utter hollow words, and speak resolves  
 Like verses banded in a madrigal.  
 I spoke in action first: I faced all risks  
 To find Fedalma. Action speaks again  
 When I, a Spanish noble, here declare  
 That I abide with her, adopt her lot,  
 Claiming alone fulfilment of her vows  
 As my betrothed wife.

FEDALMA (*wresting herself from him, and standing opposite with a look of terror*).

Nay, Silva, nay!

You could not live so; spring from your high  
 place . . .

DON SILVA

Yes, I have said it. And you, chief, are bound  
 By her strict vows, no stronger fealty  
 Being left to cancel them.

ZARCA

Strong words, my lord!

Sounds fatal as the hammer-strokes that shape  
 The glowing metal: they must shape your life.  
 That you will claim my daughter is to say  
 That you will leave your Spanish dignities,  
 Your home, your wealth, your people, to become  
 A true Zincalo; share your wanderings,  
 And be a match meet for my daughter's dower  
 By living for her tribe; take the deep oath  
 That binds you to us; rest within our camp,  
 Nevermore hold command of Spanish men,  
 And keep my orders. See, my lord, you lock  
 A many-winding chain, — a heavy chain.

## DON SILVA

I have but one resolve: let the rest follow.  
What is my rank? To-morrow it will be filled  
By one who eyes it like a carrion bird,  
Waiting for death. I shall be no more missed  
Than waves are missed that leaping on the rock  
Find there a bed and rest. Life's a vast sea  
That does its mighty errand without fail,  
Panting in unchanged strength though waves are  
changing.

And I have said it. She shall be my people,  
And where she gives her life I will give mine.  
She shall not live alone, nor die alone.  
I will elect my deeds, and be the liege,  
Not of my birth, but of that good alone  
I have discerned and chosen.

## ZARCA

Our poor faith  
Allows not rightful choice, save of the right  
Our birth has made for us. And you, my lord,  
Can still defer your choice, for some days' space.  
I march perforce to-night; you, if you will,  
Under Zincalo guard, can keep the heights  
With silent Time that slowly opes the scroll  
Of change inevitable; taking no oath  
Till my accomplished task leaves me at large  
To see you keep your purpose or renounce it.

## DON SILVA

Chief, do I hear amiss, or does your speech  
Ring with a doubleness which I had held  
Most alien to you? You would put me off,  
And cloak evasion with allowance? No!

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We will complete our pledges. I will take  
That oath which binds not me alone, but you,  
To join my life forever with Fedalma's.

ZARCA

I wrangle not, — time presses. But the oath  
Will leave you that same post upon the heights;  
Pledged to remain there while my absence lasts.  
You are agreed, my lord?

DON SILVA

Agreed to all.

ZARCA

Then I will give the summons to our camp.  
We will adopt you as a brother now,  
In the Zincalo's fashion. [*Exit ZARCA.*  
(*SILVA takes FEDALMA's hands.*)

FEDALMA

O my lord!

I think the earth is trembling: naught is firm.  
Some terror chills me with a shadowy grasp.  
Am I about to wake, or do you breathe  
Here in this valley? Did the outer air  
Vibrate to fatal words, or did they shake  
Only my dreaming soul? You a Zincalo?

DON SILVA

Is then your love too faint to raise belief  
Up to that height?

FEDALMA

Silva, had you but said  
That you would die, — that were an easy task

For you who oft have fronted death in war.  
But so to live for me, — you, used to rule, —  
You could not breathe the air my father breathes:  
His presence is subjection. Go, my lord!  
Fly, while there yet is time. Wait not to speak.  
I will declare that I refused your love, —  
Would keep no vows to you . . .

## DON SILVA

It is too late.

You shall not thrust me back to seek a good  
Apart from you. And what good? Why, to face  
Your absence, — all the want that drove me forth  
To work the will of a more tyrannous friend  
Than any uncowed father. Life at least  
Gives choice of ills; forces me to defy,  
But shall not force me to a weak defiance.  
The power that threatened you, to master me,  
That scorches like a cave-hid dragon's breath,  
Sure of its victory in spite of hate,  
Is what I last will bend to, — most defy.  
Your father has a chieftain's ends, befitting  
A soldier's eye and arm: were he as strong  
As the Moors' prophet, yet the prophet too  
Had younger captains of illustrious fame  
Among the infidels. Let him command,  
For when your father speaks, I shall hear you.  
Life were no gain if you were lost to me:  
I would straight go and seek the Moorish walls,  
Challenge their bravest, and embrace swift death.  
The Glorious Mother and her pitying Son  
Are not Inquisitors, else their heaven were hell.  
Perhaps they hate their cruel worshippers,  
And let them feed on lies. I'll rather trust  
They love you and have sent me to defend you.

## FEDALMA

I made my creed so, just to suit my mood  
 And smooth all hardship, till my father came  
 And taught my soul by ruling it. Since then  
 I cannot weave a dreaming happy creed  
 Where our love's happiness is not accursed.  
 My father shook my soul awake. And you, —  
 What the Zincala may not quit for you,  
 I cannot joy that you should quit for her.

## DON SILVA

Oh, Spanish men are not a petty band  
 Where one deserter makes a fatal breach.  
 Men, even nobles, are more plenteous  
 Than steeds and armour; and my weapons left  
 Will find new hands to wield them. Arrogance  
 Makes itself champion of mankind, and holds  
 God's purpose maimed for one hidalgo lost.  
 See where your father comes and brings a crowd  
 Of witnesses to hear my oath of love;  
 The low red sun glows on them like a fire;  
 This seems a valley in some strange new world,  
 Where we have found each other, my Fedalma.



## BOOK IV

NOW twice the day had sunk from off the hills

While Silva kept his watch there, with the band

Of strong Zincali. When the sun was high  
He slept, then, waking, strained impatient eyes  
To catch the promise of some moving form  
That might be Juan, — Juan who went and came

To soothe two hearts, and claimed naught for his own:

Friend more divine than all divinities,  
Quenching his human thirst in others' joy.  
All through the lingering nights and pale chill dawns

Juan had hovered near; with delicate sense,  
As of some breath from every changing mood,  
Had spoken or kept silence; touched his lute  
To hint of melody, or poured brief strains  
That seemed to make all sorrows natural,  
Hardly worth weeping for, since life was short,  
And shared by loving souls. Such pity welled  
Within the minstrel's heart of light-tongued Juan  
For this doomed man, who with dream-shrouded eyes

Had stepped into a torrent as a brook,  
Thinking to ford it and return at will,  
And now waked helpless in the eddying flood,  
Hemmed by its raging hurry. Once that thought,  
How easy wandering is, how hard and strict  
The homeward way, had slipped from reverie  
Into low-murmured song; — (brief Spanish song  
'Scaped him as sighs escape from other men).

*Push off the boat,  
 Quit, quit the shore,  
     The stars will guide us back:—  
 O gathering cloud,  
 O wide, wide sea,  
     O waves that keep no track!*

*On through the pines!  
 The pillared woods,  
     Where silence breathes sweet breath:—  
 O labyrinth,  
 O sunless gloom,  
     The other side of death!*

Such plaintive song had seemed to please the  
 Duke, —

Had seemed to melt all voices of reproach  
 To sympathetic sadness; but his moods  
 Had grown more fitful with the growing hours,  
 And this soft murmur had the iterant voice  
 Of heartless Echo, whom no pain can move  
 To say aught else than we have said to her.  
 He spoke, impatient: "Juan, cease thy song.  
 Our whimpering poesy and small-paced tunes  
 Have no more utterance than the cricket's chirp  
 For souls that carry heaven and hell within."  
 Then Juan, lightly: "True, my lord, I chirp  
 For lack of soul; some hungry poets chirp  
 For lack of bread. 'T were wiser to sit down  
 And count the star-seed, till I fell asleep  
 With the cheap wine of pure stupidity."  
 And Silva, checked by courtesy: "Nay, Juan,  
 Were speech once good, thy song were best of  
 speech.

I meant, all life is but poor mockery:  
 Action, place, power, the visible wide world

Are tattered masquerading of this self,  
This pulse of conscious mystery: all change,  
Whether to high or low, is change of rags.  
But for her love, I would not take a good  
Save to burn out in battle, in a flame  
Of madness that would feel no mangled limbs,  
And die not knowing death, but passing straight—  
Well, well, to other flames — in purgatory.”  
Keen Juan’s ear caught the self-discontent  
That vibrated beneath the changing tones  
Of life-contemning scorn. Gently he said:  
“ But *with* her love, my lord, the world deserves  
A higher rate; were it but masquerade,  
The rags were surely worth the wearing? ” “ Yes.  
No misery shall force me to repent  
That I have loved her.”

So with wilful talk,  
Fencing the wounded soul from beating winds  
Of truth that came unmasked, companionship  
Made the hours lighter. And the Gypsy guard,  
Trusting familiar Juan, were content,  
At friendly hint from him to still their songs  
And busy jargon round the nightly fires.  
Such sounds the quick-conceiving poet knew  
Would strike on Silva’s agitated soul  
Like mocking repetition of the oath  
That bound him in strange clanship with the tribe  
Of human panthers, flame-eyed, lithe-limbed, fierce,  
Unrecking of time-woven subtleties  
And high tribunals of a phantom-world.

But the third day, though Silva southward gazed  
Till all the shadows slanted towards him, gazed  
Till all the shadows died, no Juan came.  
Now in his stead came loneliness, and thought  
Inexorable, fastening with firm chain

What is to what hath been. Now awful Night,  
 Ancestral mystery of mysteries, came down  
 Past all the generations of the stars,  
 And visited his soul with touch more close  
 Than when he kept that younger, briefer watch  
 Under the church's roof beside his arms,  
 And won his knighthood.

Well, this solitude,  
 This company with the enduring universe,  
 Whose mighty silence carrying all the past  
 Absorbs our history as with a breath,  
 Should give him more assurance, make him strong  
 In all contempt of that poor circumstance  
 Called human life, — customs and bonds and laws  
 Wherewith men make a better or a worse,  
 Like children playing on a barren mound  
 Feigning a thing to strive for or avoid.  
 Thus Silva urged, answering his many-voiced self,  
 Whose hungry needs, like petulant multitudes,  
 Lured from the home that nurtured them to  
 strength,  
 Made loud insurgence. Thus he called on Thought,  
 On dexterous Thought, with its swift alchemy  
 To change all forms, dissolve all prejudice  
 Of man's long heritage, and yield him up  
 A crude fused world to fashion as he would.  
 Thought played him double; seemed to wear the  
 yoke  
 Of sovereign passion in the noonday height  
 Of passion's prevalence; but served anon  
 As tribune to the larger soul which brought  
 Loud-mingled cries from every human need  
 That ages had instructed into life.  
 He could not grasp Night's black blank mystery  
 And wear it for a spiritual garb  
 Creed-proof: he shuddered at its passionless touch.

On solitary souls, the universe  
Looks down inhospitable; the human heart  
Finds nowhere shelter but in human kind.  
He yearned towards images that had breath in  
them,

That sprang warm palpitant with memories  
From streets and altars, from ancestral homes,  
Banners and trophies and the cherishing rays  
Of shame and honour in the eyes of man.  
These made the speech articulate of his soul,  
That could not move to utterance of scorn  
Save in words bred by fellowship; could not feel  
Resolve of hardest constancy to love,  
The firmer for the sorrows of the loved,  
Save by concurrent energies high-wrought  
To sensibilities transcending sense  
Through closest citizenship, and long-shared pains  
Of far-off labouring ancestors. In vain  
He sought the outlaw's strength, and made a right  
Contemning that hereditary right  
Which held dim habitations in his frame,  
Mysterious haunts of echoes old and far,  
The voice divine of human loyalty.  
At home, among his people, he had played  
In sceptic ease with saints and images  
And thunders of the Church that deadened fell  
Through screens of priests plethoric. Awe, un-  
scathed  
By deeper trespass, slept without a dream.  
But for such trespass as made outcasts, still  
The ancient Furies lived with faces new  
And lurked with lighter slumber than of old  
O'er Catholic Spain, the land of sacred oaths  
That might be broken.

Now the former life  
Of close-linked fellowship, the life that made



His full-formed self, as the impregnant sap  
Of years successive frames the full-branched  
tree, —

Was present in one whole; and that great trust  
His deed had broken turned reproach on him  
From faces of all witnesses who heard  
His uttered pledges; saw him hold high place  
Centring reliance; use rich privilege  
That bound him like a victim-nourished god  
By tacit covenant to shield and bless;  
Assume the Cross and take his knightly oath  
Mature, deliberate: faces human all,  
And some divine as well as human: His  
Who hung supreme, the suffering Man divine  
Above the altar; Hers the Mother pure  
Whose glance informed his masculine tenderness  
With deepest reverence; the Archangel armed,  
Trampling man's enemy: all heroic forms  
That fill the world of faith with voices, hearts,  
And high companionship, to Silva now  
Made but one inward and insistent world  
With faces of his peers, with court and hall  
And deference, and reverent vassalage  
And filial pieties, — one current strong,  
The warmly mingled life-blood of his mind,  
Sustaining him even when he idly played  
With rules, beliefs, charges, and ceremonies  
As arbitrary fooling. Such revenge  
Is wrought by the long travail of mankind  
On him who scorns it, and would shape his life  
Without obedience.

But his warrior's pride  
Would take no wounds save on the breast. He  
faced

The fatal crowd: "I never shall repent!  
If I have sinned my sin was made for me

By men's perverseness. There's no blameless life  
Save for the passionless, no sanctities  
But have the selfsame roof and props with crime,  
Or have their roots close interlaced with vileness.  
If I have loved her less, been more a craven,  
I had kept my place and won the easy praise  
Of a true Spanish noble. But I loved,  
And, loving, dared, — not Death the warrior  
But Infamy that binds and strips and holds  
The brand and lash. I have dared all for her.  
She was my good, — what other men call heaven  
And for the sake of it bear penances;  
Nay, some of old were baited, tortured, flayed  
To win their heaven. Heaven was their good,  
She, mine. And I have braved for her all fires  
Certain or threatened; for I go away  
Beyond the reach of expiation, — far away  
From sacramental blessing. Does God bless  
No outlaw? Shut his absolution fast  
In human breath? Is there no God for me  
Save Him whose cross I have forsaken? — Well,  
I am forever exiled, — but with her.  
She is dragged out into the wilderness;  
I, with my love, will be her providence.  
I have a right to choose my good or ill,  
A right to damn myself! The ill is mine.  
I never will repent!" . . .  
Thus Silva, inwardly debating, all his ear  
Turned into audience of a twofold mind;  
For even in tumult full-fraught consciousness  
Had plenteous being for a Self aloof  
That gazed and listened, like a soul in dreams  
Weaving the wondrous tale it marvels at.  
But oft the conflict slackened, oft strong Love  
With tidal energy returning laid  
All other restlessness: Fedalma came

And with her visionary presence brought  
 What seemed a waking in the warm spring morn.  
 He still was pacing on the stony earth  
 Under the deepening night; the fresh-lit fires  
 Were flickering on dark forms and eyes that  
 met

His forward and his backward tread; but she,  
 She was within him, making his whole self  
 Mere correspondence with her image: sense,  
 In all its deep recesses where it keeps  
 The mystic stores of ecstasy, was transformed  
 To memory that killed the hour, like wine.  
 Then Silva said: "She, by herself, is life.  
 What was my joy before I loved her, — what  
 Shall Heaven lure us with, love being lost?" —  
 For he was young.

But now around the fires  
 The Gypsy band felt freer; Juan's song  
 Was no more there, nor Juan's friendly ways  
 For links of amity 'twixt their wild mood  
 And this strange brother, this pale Spanish duke,  
 Who with their Gypsy badge upon his breast  
 Took readier place within their alien hearts  
 As a marked captive, who would fain escape.  
 And Nadar, who commanded them, had known  
 The prison in Bedmár. So now, in talk  
 Foreign to Spanish ears, they said their minds,  
 Discussed their chief's intent, the lot marked out  
 For this new brother. Would he wed their  
 queen?

And some denied, saying their queen would wed  
 A true Zincalo duke, — one who would join  
 Their bands in Telemsán. But others thought  
 Young Hassan was to wed her; said their  
 chief

Would never trust this noble of Castile,

Who in his very swearing was forsworn.  
 And then one fell to chanting, in wild notes  
 Recurrent like the moan of outshut winds,  
 The adjuration they were wont to use  
 To any Spaniard who would join their tribe:  
 Words of plain Spanish, lately stirred anew  
 And ready at new impulse. Soon the rest,  
 Drawn to the stream of sound, made unison  
 Higher and lower, till the tidal sweep  
 Seemed to assail the Duke and close him round  
 With force demonic. All debate till now  
 Had wrestled with the urgency of that oath  
 Already broken; now the newer oath  
 Thrust its loud presence on him. He stood still,  
 Close baited by loud-barking thoughts, — fierce  
 hounds  
 Of that Supreme, the irreversible Past.

*The ZINCALI sing*

*Brother, hear and take the curse,  
 Curse of soul's and body's throes,  
 If you hate not all our foes,  
 Cling not fast to all our woes,  
 Turn a false Zincalo!  
 May you be accurst  
 By hunger and by thirst,  
 By spikéd pangs,  
 Starvation's fangs  
 Clutching you alone  
 When none but peering vultures hear your moan.*

*Curst by burning hands,  
 Curst by aching brow,  
 When on sea-wide sands  
 Fever lays you low;  
 By the maddened brain*

*When the running water glistens,  
 And the deaf ear listens, listens,  
 Prisoned fire within the vein  
 On the tongue and on the lip  
     Not a sip  
 From the earth or skies;  
     Hot the desert lies  
 Pressed into your anguish,  
 Narrowing earth and narrowing sky  
     Into lonely misery.  
 Lonely may you languish  
 Through the day and through the night,  
 Hate the darkness, hate the light,  
     Pray and find no ear,  
     Feel no brother near,  
     Till on death you cry,  
     Death who passes by,  
     And anew you groan,  
 Scaring the vultures all to leave you living lone:  
     Curst by soul's and body's throes  
     If you love the dark men's foes,  
 Cling not fast to all the dark men's woes,  
     Turn a false Zincolo!  
 Swear to hate the cruel cross,  
     The silver cross!  
 Glittering, laughing at the blood  
     Shed below it in a flood  
 When it glitters over Moorish porches;  
     Laughing at the scent of flesh  
 When it glitters where the fagot scorches,  
     Burning life's mysterious mesh:  
     Blood of wandering Israël,  
     Blood of wandering Ismaël,  
     Blood, the drink of Christian scorn,  
     Blood of wanderers, sons of morn  
     Where the life of men began:*



*Swear to hate the cross! —  
 Sign of all the wanderers' foes,  
 Sign of all the wanderers' woes, —  
 Else its curse light on you!  
 Else the curse upon you light  
 Of its sharp red-sworded might.  
 May it lie a blood-red blight  
 On all things within your sight:  
 On the white haze of the morn,  
 On the meadows and the corn,  
 On the sun and on the moon,  
 On the clearness of the noon,  
 On the darkness of the night.  
 May it fill your aching sight, —  
 Red-cross sword and sword blood-red, —  
 Till it press upon your head,  
 Till it lie within your brain,  
 Piercing sharp, a cross of pain,  
 Till it lie upon your heart,  
 Burning hot, a cross of fire,  
 Till from sense in every part  
 Pains have clustered like a stinging swarm  
 In the cross's form,  
 And you see naught but the cross of blood,  
 And you feel naught but the cross of fire:  
 Curst by all the cross's throes  
 If you hate not all our foes,  
 Cling not fast to all our woes,  
 Turn a false Zincalo!*

A fierce delight was in the Gypsies' chant:  
 They thought no more of Silva, only felt  
 Like those broad-chested rovers of the night  
 Who pour exuberant strength upon the air.  
 To him it seemed as if the hellish rhythm,  
 Revolving in long curves that slackened now,

Now hurried, sweeping round again to slackness,  
 Would cease no more. What use to raise his voice,  
 Or grasp his weapon? He was powerless now,  
 With these new comrades of his future, — he  
 Who had been wont to have his wishes feared  
 And guessed at as a hidden law for men.  
 Even the passive silence of the night  
 That left these howlers mastery, even the moon,  
 Rising and staring with a helpless face,  
 Angered him. He was ready now to fly  
 At some loud throat, and give the signal so  
 For butchery of himself.

But suddenly  
 The sounds that travelled towards no foreseen close  
 Were torn right off and fringed into the night;  
 Sharp Gypsy ears had caught the onward strain  
 Of kindred voices joining in the chant.  
 All started to their feet and mustered close,  
 Auguring long-awaited summons. It was come:  
 The summons to set forth and join their chief.  
 Fedalma had been called, and she was gone  
 Under safe escort, Juan following her:  
 The camp — the women, children, and old men —  
 Were moving slowly southward on the way  
 To Almería. Silva learned no more.  
 He marched perforce; what other goal was his  
 Than where Fedalma was? And so he marched  
 Through the dim passes and o'er rising hills,  
 Not knowing whither, till the morning came.

*The Moorish hall in the castle at Bedmár. The morning twilight dimly shows stains of blood on the white marble floor; yet there has been a careful restoration of order among the sparse objects of furniture. Stretched on mats lie three corpses,*

*the faces bare, the bodies covered with mantles. A little way off, with rolled matting for a pillow, lies ZARCA, sleeping. His chest and arms are bare; his weapons, turban, mail-shirt, and other upper garments lie on the floor beside him. In the outer gallery Zincali are pacing, at intervals, past the arched openings.*

ZARCA (*half rising and resting his elbow on the pillow while he looks round*)

The morning! I have slept for full three hours;  
 Slept without dreams, save of my daughter's face.  
 Its sadness waked me. Soon she will be here,  
 Soon must outlive the worst of all the pains  
 Bred by false nurture in an alien home, —  
 As if a lion in fangless infancy  
 Learned love of creatures that with fatal growth  
 It scents as natural prey, and grasps and tears,  
 Yet with heart-hunger yearns for, missing them.  
 She is a lioness. And they — the race  
 That robbed me of her — reared her to this pain.  
*He* will be crushed and torn. There was no help.  
 But she, my child, will bear it. For strong souls  
 Live like fire-hearted suns to spend their strength  
 In furthest striving action; breathe more free  
 In mighty anguish than in trivial ease.  
 Her sad face waked me. I shall meet it soon  
 Waking . . . .

(*He rises and stands looking at the corpses.*)

As now I look on these pale dead,  
 These blossoming branches crushed beneath the fall  
 Of that broad trunk to which I laid my axe  
 With fullest foresight. So will I ever face  
 In thought beforehand to its utmost reach  
 The consequences of my conscious deeds;

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So face them after, bring them to my bed,  
 And never drug my soul to sleep with lies.  
 If they are cruel, they shall be arraigned  
 By that true name; they shall be justified  
 By my high purpose, by the clear-seen good  
 That grew into my vision as I grew,  
 And makes my nature's function, the full pulse  
 Of my Zincalo soul. The Catholics,  
 Arabs, and Hebrews have their god apiece  
 To fight and conquer for them, or be bruised  
 Like Allah, and yet keep avenging stores  
 Of patient wrath. Zincali have no god  
 Who speaks to them and calls them his, unless  
 I Zarca carry living in my frame  
 The power divine that chooses them and saves.  
 Life and more life unto the chosen, death  
 To all things living that would stifle them!  
 So speaks each god that makes a nation strong;  
 Burns trees and brutes and slays all hindering men  
 The Spaniards boast their god the strongest now;  
 They win most towns by treachery, make most  
     slaves,  
 Burn the most vines and men, and rob the most.  
 I fight against that strength, and in my turn  
 Slay these brave young who duteously strove.  
 Cruel? ay, it is cruel. But, how else?  
 To save, we kill; each blow we strike at guilt  
 Hurts innocence with its shock. Men might well  
     seek  
 For purifying rites; even pious deeds  
 Need washing. But my cleansing waters flow  
 Solely from my intent.

*(He turns away from the bodies to where his  
 garments lie, but does not lift them.)*

And she must suffer!



But she has looked on the unchangeable and bowed  
 Her head beneath the yoke. And she will walk  
 No more in chilling twilight, for to-day  
 Rises our sun. The difficult night is past;  
 We keep the bridge no more, but cross it; march  
 Forth to a land where all our wars shall be  
 With greedy obstinate plants that will not yield  
 Fruit for their nurture. All our race shall come  
 From north, west, east, a kindred multitude,  
 And make large fellowship, and raise inspired  
 The shout divine, the unison of resolve.  
 So I, so she, will see our race redeemed.  
 And their keen love of family and tribe  
 Shall no more thrive on cunning, hide and lurk  
 In petty arts of abject hunted life,  
 But grow heroic in the sanctioning light,  
 And feed with ardent blood a nation's heart.  
 That is my work: and it is well begun.  
 On to achievement!

*(He takes up the mail-shirt, and looks at it,  
 then throws it down again.)*

No, I'll none of you!  
 To-day there'll be no fighting. A few hours,  
 And I shall doff these garments of the Moor:  
 Till then I will walk lightly and breathe high.

SEPHARDO (*appearing at the archway leading into  
 the outer gallery*)

You bade me wake you . . . .

ZARCA

Welcome, Doctor; see,  
 With that small task I did but beckon you  
 To graver work. You know these corpses?



## SEPHARDO

Yes.

I would they were not corpses. Storms will lay  
 The fairest trees and leave the withered stumps.  
 This Alvar and the Duke were of one age,  
 And very loving friends. I minded not  
 The sight of Don Diego's corpse, for death  
 Gave him some gentleness, and had he lived  
 I had still hated him. But this young Alvar  
 Was doubly noble, as a gem that holds  
 Rare virtues in its lustre, and his death  
 Will pierce Don Silva with a poisoned dart.  
 This fair and curly youth was Arias,  
 A son of the Pachecos; this dark face —

## ZARCA

Enough! you know their names. I had divined  
 That they were near the Duke, most like had served  
 My daughter, were her friends. So rescued them  
 From being flung upon the heap of slain.  
 Beseech you, Doctor, if you owe me aught  
 As having served your people, take the pains  
 To see these bodies buried decently.  
 And let their names be writ above their graves,  
 As those of brave young Spaniards who died well.  
 I needs must bear this womanhood in my heart, —  
 Bearing my daughter there. For once she  
 prayed, —  
 'T was at our parting, — “When you see fair hair  
 Be pitiful.” And I am forced to look  
 On fair heads living and be pitiless.  
 Your service, Doctor, will be done to her.

## SEPHARDO

A service doubly dear. For these young dead,  
 And one less happy Spaniard who still lives,

Are offerings which I wrenched from out my heart,  
 Constrained by cries of Israel: while my hands  
 Rendered the victims at command, my eyes  
 Closed themselves vainly, as if vision lay  
 Through those poor loopholes only. I will go  
 And see the graves dug by some cypresses.

## ZARCA

Meanwhile the bodies shall rest here. Farewell.

[*Exit* SEPHARDO.)

Nay, 't is no mockery. She keeps me so  
 From hardening with the hardness of my acts.  
 This Spaniard shrouded in her love, — I would  
 He lay here too that I might pity him.

*Morning. — The Plaça Santiago in Bedmár. A crowd of townsmen forming an outer circle: within, Zincali and Moorish soldiers drawn up round the central space. On the higher ground in front of the church a stake with fagots heaped, and at a little distance a gibbet. Moorish music. ZARCA enters, wearing his gold necklace with the Gypsy badge of the flaming torch over the dress of a Moorish captain, accompanied by a small band of armed Zincali, who fall aside and range themselves with the other soldiers while he takes his stand in front of the stake and gibbet. The music ceases, and there is expectant silence.*

## ZARCA

Men of Bedmár, well-wishers, and allies,  
 Whether of Moorish or of Hebrew blood,  
 Who, being galled by the hard Spaniard's yoke,  
 Have welcomed our quick conquest as release,  
 I, Zarca, the Zincalo chieftain, hold

By delegation of the Moorish King  
 Supreme command within this town and fort.  
 Nor will I, with false show of modesty,  
 Profess myself unworthy of this post,  
 For so I should but tax the giver's choice.  
 And, as ye know, while I was prisoner here,  
 Forging the bullets meant for Moorish hearts,  
 But likely now to reach another mark,  
 I learned the secrets of the town's defence,  
 Caught the loud whispers of your discontent,  
 And so could serve the purpose of the Moor  
 As the edge's keenness serves the weapon's weight.  
 And my Zincali, lynx-eyed, lithe of limb,  
 Tracked out the high Sierra's hidden path,  
 Guided the hard ascent, and were the first  
 To scale the walls and brave the showering stones.  
 In brief, I reached this rank through service done  
 By thought of mine and valour of my tribe,  
 Yet hold it but in trust, with readiness  
 To lay it down; for I and my Zincali  
 Will never pitch our tents again on land  
 The Spaniard grudges us: we seek a home  
 Where we may spread and ripen like the corn  
 By blessing of the sun and spacious earth.  
 Ye wish us well, I think, and are our friends?

## CROWD

Long life to Zarca and his strong Zincali!

## ZARCA

Now, for the cause of our assembling here.  
 'T was my command that rescued from your hands  
 That Spanish Prior and Inquisitor  
 Whom in fierce retribution you had bound  
 And meant to burn, tied to a planted cross.

I rescued him with promise that his death  
Should be more signal in its justice, — made  
Public in fullest sense, and orderly.  
Here, then, you see the stake, — slow death by  
fire;

And there a gibbet, — swift death by the cord.  
Now hear me, Moors and Hebrews of Bedmár,  
Our kindred by the warmth of Eastern blood!  
Punishing cruel wrong by cruelty  
We copy Christian crime. Vengeance is just:  
Justly we rid the earth of human fiends  
Who carry hell for pattern in their souls.  
But in high vengeance there is noble scorn:  
It tortures not the torturer, nor gives  
Iniquitous payment for iniquity.  
The great avenging angel does not crawl  
To kill the serpent with a mimic fang;  
He stands erect, with sword of keenest edge  
That slays like lightning. So too we will slay  
The cruel man; slay him because he works  
Woe to mankind. And I have given command  
To pile these fagots, not to burn quick flesh,  
But for a sign of that dire wrong to men  
Which arms our wrath with justice. While, to  
show

This Christian worshipper that we obey  
A better law than his, he shall be led  
Straight to the gibbet and to swiftest death.  
For I, the chief of the Zincali, will,  
My people shed no blood but what is shed  
In heat of battle or in judgment strict  
With calm deliberation on the right.  
Such is my will, and if it please you, — well.

CROWD

It pleases us. Long life to Zarca!

ZARCA

Hark!

The bell is striking, and they bring even now  
The prisoner from the fort. What, Nadar?

NADAR (*has appeared, cutting the crowd, and advancing toward ZARCA till he is near enough to speak in an undertone*)

Chief,

I have obeyed your word, have followed it  
As water does the furrow in the rock.

ZARCA

Your band is here?

NADAR

Yes, and the Spaniard too.

ZARCA

'T was so I ordered.

NADAR

Ay, but this sleek hound,  
Who slipped his collar off to join the wolves,  
Has still a heart for none but kennelled brutes.  
He rages at the taking of the town,  
Says all his friends are butchered; and one corpse  
He stumbled on, — well, I would sooner be  
A dead Zincalo's dog, and howl for him,  
Than be this Spaniard. Rage has made him whiter.  
One townsman taunted him with his escape,  
And thanked him for so favouring us. . . .



ZARCA

Enough!

You gave him my command that he should wait  
Within the castle, till I saw him?

NADAR

Yes.

But he defied me, broke away, ran loose  
I know not whither; he may soon be here.  
I came to warn you, lest he work us harm.

ZARCA

Fear not, I know the road I travel by:  
Its turns are no surprises. He who rules  
Must humour full as much as he commands;  
Must let men vow impossibilities;  
Grant folly's prayers that hinder folly's wish  
And serve the ends of wisdom. Ah, he comes!

[Sweeping like some pale herald from the dead,  
Whose shadow-nurtured eyes, dazed by full light,  
See naught without, but give reverted sense  
To the soul's imagery, Silva came,  
The wondering people parting wide to get  
Continuous sight of him as he passed on, —  
This high hidalgo, who through blooming years  
Had shone on men with planetary calm,  
Believed in with all sacred images  
And saints that must be taken as they were,  
Though rendering meagre service for men's praise  
Bareheaded now, carrying an unsheathed sword,  
And on his breast, where late he bore the cross,  
Wearing the Gypsy badge, his form aslant,  
Driven, it seemed, by some invisible chase,  
Right to the front of Zarca. There he paused.]

## DON SILVA

Chief, you are treacherous, cruel, devilish, —  
 Relentless as a curse that once let loose  
 From lips of wrath, lives bodiless to destroy,  
 And darkly traps a man in nets of guilt  
 Which could not weave themselves in open day  
 Before his eyes. Oh, it was bitter wrong  
 To hold this knowledge locked within your mind,  
 To stand with waking eyes in broadest light,  
 And see me, dreaming, shed my kindred's blood.  
 'T is horrible that men with hearts and hands  
 Should smile in silence like the firmament  
 And see a fellow-mortal draw a lot  
 On which themselves have written agony!  
 Such injury has no redress, no healing  
 Save what may lie in stemming further ill.  
 Poor balm for maiming! Yet I come to claim it.

## ZARCA

First prove your wrongs, and I will hear your claim.  
 Mind, you are not commander of Bedmár,  
 Nor duke, nor knight, nor anything for me,  
 Save one Zincalo, one of my subject tribe,  
 Over whose deeds my will is absolute.  
 You chose that lot, and would have railed at me  
 Had I refused it you: I warned you first  
 What oaths you had to take . . .

## DON SILVA

You never warned me

That you had linked yourself with Moorish men  
 To take this town and fortress of Bedmár, —  
 Slay my near kinsmen, him who held my place,  
 Our house's heir and guardian, — slay my friend,

My chosen brother, — desecrate the church  
 Where once my mother held me in her arms,  
 Making the holy chrism holier  
 With tears of joy that fell upon my brow!  
 You never warned . . .

## ZARCA

I warned you of your oath.  
 You shrank not, were resolved, were sure your place  
 Would never miss you, and you had your will.  
 I am no priest, and keep no consciences:  
 I keep my own place and my own command.

## DON SILVA

I said my place would never miss me — yes!  
 A thousand Spaniards died on that same day  
 And were not missed; their garments clothed the  
     backs  
 That else were bare . . .

## ZARCA

But you were just the one  
 Above the thousand, had you known the die  
 That fate was throwing then.

## DON SILVA

You knew it, — you!  
 With fiendish knowledge, smiling at the end.  
 You knew what snares had made my flying steps  
 Murderous; you let me lock my soul with oaths  
 Which your acts made a hellish sacrament.  
 I say, you knew this as a fiend would know it,  
 And let me damn myself.

## ZARCA

The deed was done  
 Before you took your oath, or reached our camp, —  
 Done when you slipped in secret from the post  
 'T was yours to keep, and not to meditate  
 If others might not fill it. For your oath,  
 What man is he who brandishes a sword  
 In darkness, kills his friends, and rages then  
 Against the night that kept him ignorant?  
 Should I, for one unstable Spaniard, quit  
 My steadfast ends as father and as chief;  
 Renounce my daughter and my people's hope,  
 Lest a deserter should be made ashamed?

## DON SILVA

Your daughter, — O great God! I vent but mad-  
 ness.  
 The past will never change. I come to stem  
 Harm that may yet be hindered. Chief — this  
 stake —  
 Tell me who is to die! Are you not bound  
 Yourself to him you took in fellowship?  
 The town is yours; let me but save the blood  
 That still is warm in men who were my . . .

## ZARCA

Peace!

They bring the prisoner.

[Zarca waved his arm  
 With head averse, in peremptory sign  
 That 'twixt them now there should be space and  
 silence.  
 Most eyes had turned to where the prisoner  
 Advanced among his guards; and Silva too

Turned eagerly, all other striving quelled  
By striving with the dread lest he should see  
His thought outside him. And he saw it there.  
The prisoner was Father Isidor:  
The man whom once he fiercely had accused  
As author of his misdeeds, — whose designs  
Had forced him into fatal secrecy.  
The imperious and inexorable Will  
Was yoked, and he who had been pitiless  
To Silva's love, was led to pitiless death.  
O hateful victory of blind wishes, — prayers  
Which hell had overheard and swift fulfilled!  
The triumph was a torture, turning all  
The strength of passion into strength of pain.  
Remorse was born within him, that dire birth  
Which robs all else of nurture, — cancerous,  
Forcing each pulse to feed its anguish, changing  
All sweetest residues of a healthy life  
To fibrous clutches of slow misery.  
Silva had but rebelled, — he was not free;  
And all the subtle cords that bound his soul  
Were tightened by the strain of one rash leap  
Made in defiance. He accused no more,  
But dumbly shrank before accusing throngs  
Of thoughts, the impetuous recurrent rush  
Of all his past-created, unchanged self.  
The Father came bareheaded, frocked, a rope  
Around his neck, — but clad with majesty,  
The strength of resolute undivided souls  
Who, owning law, obey it. In his hand  
He bore a crucifix, and praying, gazed  
Solely on that white image. But his guards  
Parted in front, and paused as they approached  
The centre, where the stake was. Isidor  
Lifted his eyes to look around him, — calm,  
Prepared to speak last words of willingness



To meet his death,—last words of faith unchanged,  
That, working for Christ's kingdom, he had  
wrought

Righteously. But his glance met Silva's eyes  
And drew him. Even images of stone  
Look living with reproach on him who maims,  
Profanes, defiles them. Silva penitent  
Moved forward, would have knelt before the man  
Who still was one with all the sacred things  
That came back on him in their sacredness,  
Kindred, and oaths, and awe, and mystery.  
But, at the sight, the Father thrust the cross  
With deprecating act before him, and his face  
Pale-quivering, flashed out horror like white light  
Flashed from the angel's sword that dooming drave  
The sinner to the wilderness. He spoke.]

#### FATHER ISIDOR

Back from me, traitorous and accursed man!  
Defile not me, who grasp the holiest,  
With touch or breath! Thou foulest murderer!  
Fouler than Cain who struck his brother down  
In jealous rage, thou for thy base delight  
Hast oped the gate for wolves to come and tear  
Uncounted brethren, weak and strong alike,  
The helpless priest, the warrior all unarmed  
Against a faithless leader: on thy head  
Will rest the sacrilege, on thy soul the blood.  
These blind Zincali, misbelievers, Moors,  
Are but as Pilate and his soldiery;  
Thou, Judas, weighted with that heaviest crime  
Which deepens hell! I warned you of this end.  
A traitorous leader, false to God and man,  
A knight apostate, you shall soon behold  
Above your people's blood the light of flames  
Kindled by you to burn me, — burn the flesh

Twin with your father's. O most wretched man!  
 Whose memory shall be of broken oaths, —  
 Broken for lust, — I turn away mine eyes  
 Forever from you. See, the stake is ready:  
 And I am ready too.

DON SILVA

It shall not be!

*(Raising his sword he rushes in front of the  
 guards who are advancing, and impedes  
 them.)*

If you are human, Chief, hear my demand!  
 Stretch not my soul upon the endless rack  
 Of this man's torture!

ZARCA

Stand aside, my lord!

Put up your sword. You vowed obedience  
 To me, your Chief. It was your latest vow.

DON SILVA

No! hew me from the spot, or fasten me  
 Amid the fagots too, if he must burn.

ZARCA

What should befall that persecuting monk  
 Was fixed before you came: no cruelty,  
 No nicely measured torture, weight for weight  
 Of injury, no luscious-toothed revenge  
 That justifies the injurer by its joy:  
 I seek but rescue and security  
 For harmless men, and such security  
 Means death to vipers and inquisitors.  
 These fagots shall but innocently blaze

In sign of gladness, when this man is dead,  
 That one more torturer has left the earth.  
 'T is not for infidels to burn live men  
 And ape the rules of Christian piety.  
 This hard oppressor shall not die by fire:  
 He mounts the gibbet, dies a speedy death,  
 That, like a transfixed dragon, he may cease  
 To vex mankind. Quick, guards, and clear the  
 path!

[As well-trained hounds that hold their fleetness  
 tense

In watchful, loving fixity of dark eyes,  
 And move with movement of their master's will,  
 The Gypsies with a wavelike swiftness met  
 Around the Father, and in wheeling course  
 Passed beyond Silva to the gibbet's foot,  
 Behind their chieftain. Sudden left alone  
 With weapon bare, the multitude aloof,  
 Silva was mazed in doubtful consciousness,  
 As one who slumbering in the day awakes  
 From striving into freedom, and yet feels  
 His sense half captive to intangible things;  
 Then with a flush of new decision sheathed  
 His futile naked weapon, and strode quick  
 To Zarca, speaking with a voice new-toned,  
 The struggling soul's hoarse, suffocated cry  
 Beneath the grappling anguish of despair.]

#### DON SILVA

Zincalo, devil, blackest infidel!  
 You cannot hate that man as you hate me!  
 Finish your torture, — take me, — lift me up  
 And let the crowd spit at me, — every Moor  
 Shoot reeds at me, and kill me with slow death  
 Beneath the midday fervour of the sun, —

Or crucify me with a thieving hound, —  
Slake your hate so, and I will thank it: spare me  
Only this man.

## ZARCA

Madman, I hate you not.  
But if I did, my hate were poorly served  
By my device, if I should strive to mix  
A bitterer misery for you than to taste  
With leisure of a soul in unharmed limbs  
The flavour of your folly. For my course,  
It has a goal, and takes no truant path  
Because of you. I am your Chief: to me  
You are but a Zincalo in revolt.

## DON SILVA

No, I am no Zincalo! I disown  
The name I took in madness. Here I tear  
This badge away. I am a Catholic knight,  
A Spaniard who will die a Spaniard's death!

[Hark! while he casts the badge upon the ground  
And tramples on it, Silva hears a shout:  
Was it a shout that threatened him? He looked  
From out the dizzying flames of his own rage  
In hope of adversaries, — and he saw above  
The form of Father Isidor upswung  
Convulsed with martyr throes; and knew the shout  
For wonted exultation of the crowd  
When malefactors die, — or saints, or heroes.  
And now to him that white-frocked murdered form  
Which hanging judged him as its murderer,  
Turned to a symbol of his guilt, and stirred  
Tremors till then unwaked. With sudden snatch  
At something hidden in his breast, he strode  
Right upon Zarca: at the instant, down

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Fell the great Chief, and Silva, staggering back,  
Heard not the shriek of the Zinali, felt  
Not their fierce grasp, — heard, felt but Zarca's  
words

Which seemed his soul outleaping in a cry  
And urging men to run like rival waves  
Whose rivalry is but obedience.]

ZARCA (*as he falls*)

My daughter! call her! Call my daughter!

NADAR (*supporting ZARCA and crying to the Gypsies who have clutched SILVA*)

Stay!

Tear not the Spaniard, tie him to the stake:  
Hear what the Chief shall bid us, — there is time!

[Swiftly they tied him, pleasing vengeance so  
With promise that would leave them free to watch  
Their stricken good, their Chief stretched help-  
lessly

Pillowed upon the strength of loving limbs.  
He heaved low groans, but would not spend his  
breath

In useless words: he waited till *she* came,  
Keeping his life within the citadel  
Of one great hope. And now around him closed  
(But in wide circle, checked by loving fear)  
His people all, holding their wails suppressed  
Lest death believed-in should be over-bold:  
All life hung on their Chief, — he would not die;  
His image gone, there were no wholeness left  
To make a world of for Zinali's thought.  
Eager they stood, but hushed; the outer crowd  
Spoke only in low murmurs, and some climbed



And clung with legs and arms on perilous coigns,  
Striving to see where that colossal life  
Lay panting, — lay a Titan struggling still  
To hold and give the precious hidden fire  
Before the stronger grappled him. Above  
The young bright morning cast athwart white  
walls

Her shadows blue, and with their clear-cut line,  
Mildly inexorable as the dial-hand's  
Measured the shrinking future of an hour  
Which held a shrinking hope. And all the while  
The silent beat of time in each man's soul  
Made aching pulses.

But the cry, "She comes!"

Parted the crowd like waters: and she came.  
Swiftly as once before, inspired with joy,  
She flashed across the space and made new  
light,

Glowing upon the glow of evening,  
So swiftly now she came, inspired with woe,  
Strong with the strength of all her father's  
pain,

Thrilling her as with fire of rage divine  
And battling energy. She knew, — saw all:  
The stake with Silva bound, — her father  
pierced, —

To this she had been born: the second time  
Her father called her to the task of life.  
She knelt beside him. Then he raised himself,  
And on her face there flashed from his the  
light

As of a star that waned and flames anew  
In mighty dissolution: 't was the flame  
Of a surviving trust, in agony.  
He spoke the parting prayer that was command,  
Must sway her will, and reign invisibly.]

## ZARCA

My daughter, you have promised, — you will live  
 To save our people. In my garments here  
 I carry written pledges from the Moor:  
 He will keep faith in Spain and Africa.  
 Your weakness may be stronger than my strength,  
 Winning more love. I cannot tell the end.  
 I held my people's good within my breast.  
 Behold, now I deliver it to you.  
 See, it still breathes unstrangled, — if it dies,  
 Let not your failing will be murderer. Rise,  
 And tell our people now I wait in pain, —  
 I cannot die until I hear them say  
 They will obey you.

[Meek, she pressed her lips  
 With slow solemnity upon his brow,  
 Sealing her pledges. Firmly then she rose,  
 And met her people's eyes with kindred gaze,  
 Dark-flashing, fired by effort strenuous  
 Trampling on pain.]

## FEDALMA

Zincali all, who hear!  
 Your Chief is dying: I his daughter live  
 To do his dying will. He asks you now  
 To promise me obedience as your Queen,  
 That we may seek the land he won for us,  
 And live the better life for which he toiled.  
 Speak now, and fill my father's dying ear  
 With promise that you will obey him dead,  
 Obeying me his child.

[Straightway arose  
 A shout of promise, sharpening into cries  
 That seemed to plead despairingly with death.]

## THE ZINCALI

We will obey! Our Chief shall never die!  
 We will obey him, — will obey our Queen!

[The shout unanimous, the concurrent rush  
 Of many voices, quiring shook the air  
 With multitudinous wave: now rose, now fell,  
 Then rose again, the echoes following slow,  
 As if the scattered brethren of the tribe  
 Had caught afar and joined the ready vow.  
 Then some could hold no longer, but must rush  
 To kiss his dying feet, and some to kiss  
 The hem of their Queen's garment. But she raised  
 Her hand to hush them. "Hark! your Chief may  
 speak

Another wish." Quickly she kneeled again,  
 While they upon the ground kept motionless,  
 With head outstretched. They heard his words;  
 for now,  
 Grasping at Nadar's arm, he spoke more loud,  
 As one who, having fought and conquered, hurls  
 His strength away with hurling off his shield.]

## ZARCA

Let loose the Spaniard! give him back his sword;  
 He cannot move to any vengeance more, —  
 His soul is locked 'twixt two opposing crimes.  
 I charge you let him go unharmed and free  
 Now through your midst. . . .

[With that he sank again, —  
 His breast heaved strongly tow'rd sharp sudden  
 falls,  
 And all his life seemed needed for each breath:  
 Yet once he spoke.]

My daughter, lay your arm  
Beneath my head, — so, — bend and breathe on  
me.

I cannot see you more, — the Night is come.  
Be strong, — remember, — I can only — die.

[His voice went into silence, but his breast  
Heaved long and moaned: its broad strength kept  
a life

That heard naught, saw naught, save what once  
had been,

And what might be in days and realms afar, —  
Which now in pale procession faded on  
Toward the thick darkness. And she bent above  
In sacramental watch to see great Death,  
Companion of her future, who would wear  
Forever in her eyes her father's form.

And yet she knew that hurrying feet had  
gone

To do the Chief's behest, and in her soul  
He who was once its lord was being jarred  
With loosening of cords, that would not loose  
The tightening torture of his anguish. This, —  
Oh she knew it! — knew it as martyrs knew  
The prongs that tore their flesh, while yet their  
tongues

Refused the ease of lies. In moments high  
Space widens in the soul. And so she knelt,  
Clinging with piety and awed resolve  
Beside this altar of her father's life,  
Seeing long travel under solemn suns  
Stretching beyond it; never turned her eyes,  
Yet felt that Silva passed; beheld his face  
Pale, vivid, all alone, imploring her  
Across black waters fathomless.

And he passed.  
 The Gypsies made wide pathway, shrank aloof  
 As those who fear to touch the thing they hate,  
 Lest hate triumphant, mastering all the limbs,  
 Should tear, bite, crush, in spite of hindering will.  
 Slowly he walked, reluctant to be safe  
 And bear dishonoured life which none assailed;  
 Walked hesitatingly, all his frame instinct  
 With high-born spirit, never used to dread  
 Or crouch for smiles, yet stung, yet quivering  
 With helpless strength, and in his soul convulsed  
 By visions where pale horror held a lamp  
 Over wide-reaching crime. Silence hung round:  
 It seemed the Plaça hushed itself to hear  
 His footsteps and the Chief's deep dying breath.  
 Eyes quickened in the stillness, and the light  
 Seemed one clear gaze upon his misery.  
 And yet he could not pass her without pause:  
 One instant he must pause and look at her;  
 But with that glance at her averted head,  
 New-urged by pain he turned away and went,  
 Carrying forever with him what he fled, —  
 Her murdered love, — her love, a dear wronged  
 ghost,  
 Facing him, beauteous, 'mid the throngs of hell.  
 O fallen and forsaken! were no hearts  
 Amid that crowd, mindful of what had been? —  
 Hearts such as wait on beggared royalty,  
 Or silent watch by sinners who despair?

Silva had vanished. That dismissed revenge  
 Made larger room for sorrow in fierce hearts;  
 And sorrow filled them. For the Chief was dead.  
 The mighty breast subsided slow to calm,  
 Slow from the face the ethereal spirit waned,  
 As wanes the parting glory from the heights,



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And leaves them in their pallid majesty.  
Fedalma kissed the marble lips and said,  
“He breathes no more.” And then a long loud  
wail

Poured out upon the morning, made her light  
Ghastly as smiles on some fair maniac’s face  
Smiling unconscious o’er her bridegroom’s corpse.  
The wailing men in eager press closed round,  
And made a shadowing pall beneath the sun.  
They lifted reverent the prostrate strength,  
Sceptred anew by death. Fedalma walked  
Tearless, erect, following the dead, — her cries  
Deep smothering in her breast, as one who guides  
Her children through the wilds, and sees and  
knows

Of danger more than they, and feels more pangs,  
Yet shrinks not, groans not, bearing in her heart  
Their ignorant misery and their trust in her.

## BOOK V

**T**HE eastward rocks of Almería's bay  
 Answer long farewells of the travelling sun  
 With softest glow as from an inward pulse  
 Changing and flushing: all the Moorish ships  
 Seem conscious too, and shoot out sudden shadows;  
 Their black hulls snatch a glory, and their sails  
 Show variegated radiance, gently stirred  
 Like broad wings poised. Two galleys moored  
 apart  
 Show decks as busy as a home of ants  
 Storing new forage; from their sides the boats  
 Slowly pushed off, anon with flashing oar  
 Make transit to the quay's smooth-quarried edge  
 Where thronging Gypsies are in haste to lade  
 Each as it comes with grandames, babes, and  
 wives,  
 Or with dust-tinted goods, the company  
 Of wandering years. Naught seems to lie un-  
 moved,  
 For 'mid the throng the lights and shadows play,  
 And make all surface eager, while the boats  
 Sway restless as a horse that heard the shouts  
 And surging hum incessant. Naked limbs  
 With beauteous ease bend, lift, and throw, or raise  
 High signalling hands. The black-haired mother  
 steps  
 Athwart the boat's edge, and with opened arms,  
 A wandering Isis outcast from the gods,  
 Leans towards her lifted little one. The boat  
 Full-laden cuts the waves, and dirge-like cries  
 Rise and then fall within it as it moves  
 From high to lower and from bright to dark.  
 Hither and thither, grave white-turbaned Moors

Move helpfully, and some bring welcome gifts,  
 Bright stuffs and cutlery, and bags of seed  
 To make new waving crops in Africa.  
 Others aloof with folded arms slow-eyed  
 Survey man's labour, saying, "God is great;"  
 Or seek with question deep the Gypsies' root,  
 And whether their false faith, being small, will  
 prove

Less damning than the copious false creeds  
 Of Jews and Christians: Moslem subtlety  
 Found balanced reasons, warranting suspense  
 As to whose hell was deepest, — 't was enough  
 That there was room for all. Thus the sedate.  
 The younger heads were busy with the tale  
 Of that great Chief whose exploits helped the  
 Moor.

And, talking still, they shouldered past their  
 friends,

Following some lure which held their distant gaze  
 To eastward of the quay, where yet remained  
 A low black tent close guarded all around  
 By armed Zincali. Fronting it above,  
 Raised by stone steps that sought a jutting strand,  
 Fedalma stood and marked with anxious watch  
 Each laden boat the remnant lessening  
 Of cargo on the shore, or traced the course  
 Of Nadar to and fro in hard command  
 Of noisy tumult; imaging oft anew  
 How much of labour still deferred the hour  
 When they must lift the boat and bear away  
 Her father's coffin, and her feet must quit  
 This shore forever. Motionless she stood,  
 Black-crowned with wreaths of many-shadowed  
 hair;

Black-robed, but wearing wide upon her breast  
 Her father's golden necklace and his badge.

Her limbs were motionless, but in her eyes  
And in her breathing lip's soft tremulous curve  
Was intense motion as of prisoned fire  
Escaping subtly in outleaping thought.  
She watches anxiously, and yet she dreams:  
The busy moments now expand, now shrink  
To narrowing swarms within the refluent space  
Of changeful consciousness. For in her thought  
Already she has left the fading shore,  
Sails with her people, seeks an unknown land,  
And bears the burning length of weary days  
That parching fall upon her father's hope,  
Which she must plant and see it wither only, —  
Wither and die. She saw the end begun.  
Zincali hearts were not unfaithful: she  
Was centre to the savage loyalty  
Which vowed obedience to Zarca dead.  
But soon their natures missed the constant stress  
Of his command, that, while it fired, restrained  
By urgency supreme, and left no play  
To fickle impulse scattering desire.  
They loved their Queen, trusted in Zarca's child,  
Would bear her o'er the desert on their arms  
And think the weight a gladsome victory;  
But that great force which knit them into one,  
The invisible passion of her father's soul,  
That wrought them visibly into its will,  
And would have bound their lives with perma-  
nence,  
Was gone. Already Hassan and two bands,  
Drawn by fresh baits of gain, had newly sold  
Their service to the Moors, despite her call,  
Known as the echo of her father's will,  
To all the tribe, that they should pass with her  
Straightway to Telemsán. They were not moved  
By worse rebellion than the wilful wish

To fashion their own service; they still meant  
 To come when it should suit them. But she said,  
 This is the cloud no bigger than a hand,  
 Sure-threatening. In a little while, the tribe  
 That was to be the ensign of the race,  
 And draw it into conscious union,  
 Itself would break in small and scattered bands  
 That, living on scant prey, would still disperse  
 And propagate forgetfulness. Brief years,  
 And that great purpose fed with vital fire  
 That might have glowed for half a century,  
 Subduing, quickening, shaping, like a sun, —  
 Would be a faint tradition, flickering low  
 In dying memories, fringing with dim light  
 The nearer dark.

Far, far the future stretched  
 Beyond that busy present on the quay,  
 Far her straight path beyond it. Yet she watched  
 To mark the growing hour, and yet in dream  
 Alternate she beheld another track,  
 And felt herself unseen pursuing it  
 Close to a wanderer, who with haggard gaze  
 Looked out on loneliness. The backward years —  
 Oh she would not forget them — would not drink  
 Of waters that brought rest, while he far off  
 Remembered. “Father, I renounced the joy, —  
 You must forgive the sorrow.”

So she stood,  
 Her struggling life compressed into that hour,  
 Yearning, resolving, conquering; though she  
 seemed  
 Still as a tutelary image sent  
 To guard her people and to be the strength  
 Of some rock-citadel.

Below her sat



Slim mischievous Hinda, happy, red-bedecked  
 With row of berries, grinning, nodding oft,  
 And shaking high her small dark arm and hand  
 Responsive to the black-maned Ismaël,  
 Who held aloft his spoil, and clad in skins  
 Seemed the Boy prophet of the wilderness  
 Escaped from tasks prophetic. But anon  
 Hinda would backward turn upon her knees,  
 And like a pretty loving hound would bend  
 To fondle her Queen's feet, then lift her head  
 Hoping to feel the gently pressing palm  
 Which touched the deeper sense. Fedalma knew,—  
 From out the black robe stretched her speaking hand  
 And shared the girl's content.

So the dire hours  
 Burdened with destiny, — the death of hopes  
 Darkening long generations, or the birth  
 Of thoughts undying, — such hours sweep along  
 In their aerial ocean measureless  
 Myriads of little joys, that ripen sweet  
 And soothe the sorrowful spirit of the world,  
 Groaning and travailing with the painful birth  
 Of slow redemption.

But emerging now  
 From eastward fringing lines of idling men  
 Quick Juan lightly sought the upward steps  
 Behind Fedalma, and two paces off,  
 With head uncovered, said in gentle tones,  
 "Lady Fedalma!" — (Juan's password now  
 Used by no other,) and Fedalma turned,  
 Knowing who sought her. He advanced a step,  
 And meeting straight her large calm questioning  
 gaze,  
 Warned her of some grave purport by a face  
 That told of trouble. Lower still he spoke.

## JUAN

Look from me, lady, towards a moving form  
 That quits the crowd and seeks the lonelier  
     strand, —  
 A tall and gray-clad pilgrim . . .

[Solemnly

His low tones fell on her, as if she passed  
 Into religious dimness among tombs,  
 And trod on names in everlasting rest.  
 Lingeringly she looked, and then with voice  
 Deep and yet soft, like notes from some long chord  
 Responsive to thrilled air, said:]

## FEDALMA

It is he!

[Juan kept silence for a little space,  
 With reverent caution, lest his lighter grief  
 Might seem a wanton touch upon her pain.  
 But time was urging him with visible flight,  
 Changing the shadows: he must utter all.]

## JUAN

That man was young when last I pressed his hand, —  
 In that dread moment when he left Bedmár.  
 He has aged since: the week has made him gray.  
 And yet I knew him, — knew the white-streaked  
     hair  
 Before I saw his face, as I should know  
 The tear-dimmed writing of a friend. See now, —  
 Does he not linger, — pause? — perhaps expect . . .

[Juan plead timidly: Fedalma's eyes  
 Flashed; and through all her frame there ran the  
     shock  
 Of some sharp-wounding joy, like his who hastes

And dreads to come too late, and comes in time  
To press a loved hand dying. She was mute  
And made no gesture: all her being paused  
In resolution, as some leonine wave  
That makes a moment's silence ere it leaps.]

## JUAN

He came from Carthagená, in a boat  
Too slight for safety; yon small two-oared boat  
Below the rock; the fisher-boy within  
Awaits his signal. But the pilgrim waits . . .

## FEDALMA

Yes, I will go! — Father, I owe him this,  
For loving me made all his misery.  
And we will look once more, — will say farewell  
As in a solemn rite to strengthen us  
For our eternal parting. Juan, stay  
Here in my place, to warn me were there need.  
And, Hinda, follow me!

[All men who watched  
Lost her regretfully, then drew content  
From thought that she must quickly come again,  
And filled the time with striving to be near.  
She, down the steps, along the sandy brink  
To where he stood, walked firm; with quickened  
step  
The moment when each felt the other saw.  
He moved at sight of her: their glances met;  
It seemed they could no more remain aloof  
Than nearing waters hurrying into one.  
Yet their steps slackened and they paused apart,  
Pressed backward by the force of memories  
Which reigned supreme as death above desire.]

Two paces off they stood and silently  
 Looked at each other. Was it well to speak?  
 Could speech be clearer, stronger, tell them more  
 Than that long gaze of their renouncing love?  
 They passed from silence hardly knowing how;  
 It seemed they heard each other's thought before.]

## DON SILVA

I go to be absolved, to have my life  
 Washed into fitness for an offering  
 To injured Spain. But I have naught to give  
 For that last injury to her I loved  
 Better than I loved Spain. I am accurst  
 Above all sinners, being made the curse  
 Of her I sinned for. Pardon! Penitence!  
 When they have done their utmost, still beyond  
 Out of their reach stands Injury unchanged  
 And changeless. I should see it still in heaven, —  
 Out of my reach, forever in my sight:  
 Wearing your grief, 't would hide the smiling  
 seraphs.

I bring no puling prayer, Fedalma, — ask  
 No balm of pardon that may soothe my soul  
 For others' bleeding wounds: I am not come  
 To say, "Forgive me:" you must not forgive,  
 For you must see me ever as I am, —  
 Your father's . . .

## FEDALMA

Speak it not! Calamity  
 Comes like a deluge and o'erfloods our crimes,  
 Till sin is hidden in woe. You — I — we two,  
 Grasping we knew not what, that seemed delight,  
 Opened the sluices of that deep.

DON SILVA

We two? —

Fedalma, you were blameless, helpless.

FEDALMA

No!

It shall not be that you did aught alone.  
 For when we loved I willed to reign in you,  
 And I was jealous even of the day  
 If it could gladden you apart from me.  
 And so, it must be that I shared each deed  
 Our love was root of.

DON SILVA

Dear! you share the woe, —

Nay, the worst dart of vengeance fell on you.

FEDALMA

Vengeance! She does but sweep us with her  
 skirts, —  
 She takes large space, and lies a baleful light  
 Revolving with long years, — sees children's chil-  
 dren,  
 Blights them in their prime. Oh, if two lovers  
 leaned  
 To breathe one air and spread a pestilence,  
 They would but lie two livid victims dead  
 Amid the city of the dying. We  
 With our poor petty lives have strangled one  
 That ages watch for vainly.

DON SILVA

Deep despair

Fills all your tones as with slow agony.



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Speak words that narrow anguish to some shape:  
Tell me what dread is close before you?

FEDALMA

None.

No dread, but clear assurance of the end.  
My father held within his mighty frame  
A people's life: great futures died with him  
Never to rise, until the time shall ripe  
Some other hero with the will to save  
The lost Zincali.

DON SILVA

Yet your people's shout —  
I heard it — sounded as the plenteous rush  
Of full-fed sources, shaking their wild souls  
With power that promised sway.

FEDALMA

Ah yes, that shout  
Came from full hearts: they meant obedience.  
But they are orphaned: their poor childish feet  
Are vagabond in spite of love, and stray  
Forgetful after little lures. For me, —  
I am but as the funeral urn that bears  
The ashes of a leader.

DON SILVA

O great God!  
What am I but a miserable brand  
Lit by mysterious wrath? I lie cast down  
A blackened branch upon the desolate ground  
Where once I kindled ruin. I shall drink  
No cup of purest water but will taste  
Bitter with thy lone hopelessness, Fedalma.

## FEDALMA

Nay, Silva, think of me as one who sees  
A light serene and strong on one sole path  
Which she will tread till death. . . .  
He trusted me, and I will keep his trust:  
My life shall be its temple. I will plant  
His sacred hope within the sanctuary  
And die its priestess, — though I die alone,  
A hoary woman on the altar step,  
Cold 'mid cold ashes. That is my chief good.  
The deepest hunger of a faithful heart  
Is faithfulness. Wish me naught else. And you,—  
You too will live. . . .

## DON SILVA

I go to Rome, to seek  
The right to use my knightly sword again;  
The right to fill my place and live or die  
So that all Spaniards shall not curse my name.  
I sat one hour upon the barren rock  
And longed to kill myself; but then I said,  
I will not leave my name in infamy,  
I will not be perpetual rottenness  
Upon the Spaniard's air. If I must sink  
At last to hell, I will not take my stand  
Among the coward crew who could not bear  
The harm themselves had done, which others bore.  
My young life yet may fill some bloody breach,  
And I will take no pardon, not my own,  
Not God's, — no pardon idly on my knees;  
But it shall come to me upon my feet  
And in the thick of action, and each deed  
That carried shame and wrong shall be the sting  
That drives me higher up the steep of honour

In deeds of duteous service to that Spain  
 Who nourished me on her expectant breast,  
 The heir of highest gifts. I will not fling  
 My earthly being down for carrion  
 To fill the air with loathing: I will be  
 The living prey of some fierce noble death  
 That leaps upon me while I move. Aloud  
 I said, "I will redeem my name," and then, —  
 I know not if aloud: I felt the words  
 Drinking up all my senses, — "She still lives.  
 I would not quit the dear familiar earth  
 Where both of us behold the selfsame sun,  
 Where there can be no strangeness 'twixt our  
 thoughts  
 So deep as their communion." Resolute  
 I rose and walked. — Fedalma, think of me  
 As one who will regain the only life  
 Where he is other than apostate, — one  
 Who seeks but to renew and keep the vows  
 Of Spanish knight and noble. But the breach  
 Outside those vows — the fatal second breach —  
 Lies a dark gulf where I have naught to cast,  
 Not even expiation, — poor pretence,  
 Which changes naught but what survives the past.  
 And raises not the dead. That deep dark gulf  
 Divides us.

## FEDALMA

Yes, forever. We must walk  
 Apart unto the end. Our marriage rite  
 Is our resolve that we will each be true  
 To high allegiance, higher than our love, —  
 Our dear young love, — its breath was happiness!  
 But it had grown upon a larger life  
 Which tore its roots asunder. We rebelled, —  
 The larger life subdued us. Yet we are wed;

For we shall carry each the pressure deep  
Of the other's soul. I soon shall leave the shore.  
The winds to-night will bear me far away.  
My lord, farewell!

[He did not say "Farewell."  
But neither knew that he was silent. She,  
For one long moment, moved not. They knew  
naught  
Save that they parted; for their mutual gaze  
As with their soul's full speech forbade their hands  
To seek each other, — those oft-clasping hands  
Which had a memory of their own, and went  
Widowed of one dear touch forevermore.  
At last she turned and with swift movement  
passed,  
Beckoning to Hinda, who was bending low  
And lingered still to wash her shells, but soon  
Leaping and scampering followed, while her Queen  
Mounted the steps again and took her place,  
Which Juan rendered silently.

And now  
The press upon the quay was thinned; the ground  
Was cleared of cumbering heaps, the eager shouts  
Had sunk, and left a murmur more restrained  
By common purpose. All the men ashore  
Were gathering into ordered companies,  
And with less clamour filled the waiting boats,  
As if the speaking light commanded them  
To quiet speed: for now the farewell glow  
Was on the topmost heights, and where far ships  
Were southward tending, tranquil, slow, and white  
Upon the luminous meadow toward the verge.  
The quay was in still shadow, and the boats  
Went sombrely upon the sombre waves.  
Fedalma watched again; but now her gaze





By the large crescent moon, with Hesperus  
And those great stars that lead the eager host.  
Fedalma stood and watched the little bark  
Lying jet-black upon moon-whitened waves.  
Silva was standing too. He too divined  
A steadfast form that held him with its thought  
And eyes that sought him vanishing: he saw  
The waters widen slowly, till at last  
Straining he gazed and knew not if he gazed  
On aught but blackness overhung by stars.]

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## THE LEGEND OF JUBAL

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**W**HEN Cain was driven from Jehovah's  
land  
He wandered eastward, seeking some far  
strand

Ruled by kind gods who asked no offerings  
Save pure field-fruits, as aromatic things,  
To feed the subtler sense of frames divine  
That lived on fragrance for their food and wine:  
Wild joyous gods, who winked at faults and folly,  
And could be pitiful and melancholy.  
He never had a doubt that such gods were;  
He looked within, and saw them mirrored there.  
Some think he came at last to Tartary,  
And some to Ind; but, howsoe'er it be,  
His staff he planted where sweet waters ran,  
And in that home of Cain the Arts began.

Man's life was spacious in the early world:  
It paused, like some slow ship with sail unfurled  
Waiting in seas by scarce a wavelet curled;  
Beheld the low star-paces of the skies,  
And grew from strength to strength through cen-  
turies;  
Saw infant trees fill out their giant limbs,  
And heard a thousand times the sweet bird's mar-  
riage hymns.

In Cain's young city none had heard of Death  
Save him, the founder; and it was his faith  
That here, away from harsh Jehovah's law,  
Man was immortal, since no halt or flaw

In Cain's own frame betrayed six hundred years,  
 But dark as pines that autumn never sears  
 His locks thronged backward as he ran, his frame  
 Rose like the orbéd sun each morn the same,  
 Lake-mirrored to his gaze; and that red brand,  
 The scorching impress of Jehovah's hand,  
 Was still clear-edged to his unwearied eye,  
 Its secret firm in time-fraught memory.  
 He said, " My happy offspring shall not know  
 That the red life from out a man may flow  
 When smitten by his brother." True, his race  
 Bore each one stamped upon his new-born face  
 A copy of the brand no whit less clear;  
 But every mother held that little copy dear.

Thus generations in glad idlesse throve,  
 Nor hunted prey, nor with each other strove;  
 For clearest springs were plenteous in the land,  
 And gourds for cups; the ripe fruits sought the  
 hand,

Bending the laden boughs with fragrant gold;  
 And for their roofs and garments wealth untold  
 Lay everywhere in grasses and broad leaves:  
 They laboured gently, as a maid who weaves  
 Her hair in mimic mats, and pauses oft  
 And strokes across her palm the tresses soft,  
 Then peeps to watch the poiséd butterfly,  
 Or little burdened ants that homeward hie.  
 Time was but leisure to their lingering thought,  
 There was no need for haste to finish aught;  
 But sweet beginnings were repeated still  
 Like infant babblings that no task fulfil;  
 For love, that loved not change, constrained the  
 simple will.

Till, hurling stones in mere athletic joy,  
 Strong Lamech struck and killed his fairest boy,

And tried to wake him with the tenderest cries,  
 And fetched and held before the glazed eyes  
 The things they best had loved to look upon;  
 But never glance or smile or sigh he won.  
 The generations stood around those twain  
 Helplessly gazing, till their father Cain  
 Parted the press, and said, "He will not wake;  
 This is the endless sleep, and we must make  
 A bed deep down for him beneath the sod;  
 For know, my sons, there is a mighty God  
 Angry with all man's race, but most with me.  
 I fled from out His land in vain! — 't is He  
 Who came and slew the lad, for He has found  
 This home of ours, and we shall all be bound  
 By the harsh bands of His most cruel will,  
 Which any moment may some dear one kill.  
 Nay, though we live for countless moons, at last  
 We and all ours shall die like summers past.  
 This is Jehovah's will, and He is strong;  
 I thought the way I travelled was too long  
 For Him to follow me: my thought was vain!  
 He walks unseen, but leaves a track of pain,  
 Pale Death His footprint is, and He will come  
 again!"

And a new spirit from that hour came o'er  
 The race of Cain: soft idlesse was no more,  
 But even the sunshine had a heart of care,  
 Smiling with hidden dread — a mother fair  
 Who folding to her breast a dying child  
 Beams with feigned joy that but makes sadness mild.  
 Death was now lord of Life, and at his word  
 Time, vague as air before, new terrors stirred,  
 With measured wing now audibly arose  
 Throbbing through all things to some unknown  
 close.

Now glad Content by clutching Haste was torn,  
 And Work grew eager, and Device was born.  
 It seemed the light was never loved before,  
 Now each man said, "'T will go and come no  
 more."

No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,  
 No form, no shadow but new dearness took  
 From the one thought that life must have an end;  
 And the last parting now began to send  
 Diffusive dread through love and wedded bliss,  
 Thrilling them into finer tenderness.  
 Then Memory disclosed her face divine,  
 That like the calm nocturnal lights doth shine  
 Within the soul, and shows the sacred graves,  
 And shows the presence that no sunlight craves,  
 No space, no warmth, but moves among them all;  
 Gone and yet here, and coming at each call,  
 With ready voice and eyes that understand,  
 And lips that ask a kiss, and dear responsive hand.

Thus to Cain's race death was tear-watered seed  
 Of various life and action-shaping need.  
 But chief the sons of Lamech felt the stings  
 Of new ambition, and the force that springs  
 In passion beating on the shores of fate.  
 They said, "There comes a night when all too late  
 The mind shall long to prompt the achieving hand,  
 The eager thought behind closed portals stand,  
 And the last wishes to the mute lips press  
 Buried ere death in silent helplessness.  
 Then while the soul its way with sound can cleave,  
 And while the arm is strong to strike and heave,  
 Let soul and arm give shape that will abide  
 And rule above our graves, and power divide  
 With that great god of day, whose rays must bend  
 As we shall make the moving shadows tend.



Come, let us fashion acts that are to be,  
 When we shall lie in darkness silently,  
 As our young brother doth, whom yet we see  
 Fallen and slain, but reigning in our will  
 By that one image of him pale and still."

For Lamech's sons were heroes of their race:  
 Jabal, the eldest, bore upon his face  
 The look of that calm river-god, the Nile,  
 Mildly secure in power that needs not guile.  
 But Tubal-Cain was restless as the fire  
 That glows and spreads and leaps from high to  
 higher

Where'er is aught to seize or to subdue;  
 Strong as a storm he lifted or o'erthrew,  
 His urgent limbs like rounded granite grew,  
 Such granite as the plunging torrent wears  
 And roaring rolls around through countless years.  
 But strength that still on movement must be fed,  
 Inspiring thought of change, devices bred,  
 And urged his mind through earth and air to rove  
 For force that he could conquer if he strove,  
 For lurking forms that might new tasks fulfil  
 And yield unwilling to his stronger will.  
 Such Tubal-Cain. But Jubal had a frame  
 Fashioned to finer senses, which became  
 A yearning for some hidden soul of things,  
 Some outward touch complete on inner springs  
 That vaguely moving bred a lonely pain,  
 A want that did but stronger grow with gain  
 Of all good else, as spirits might be sad  
 For lack of speech to tell us they are glad.  
 Now Jabal learned to tame the lowing kine,  
 And from their udders drew the snow-white wine  
 That stirs the innocent joy, and makes the stream  
 Of elemental life with fulness teem;

The star-browed calves he nursed with feeding  
hand,  
And sheltered them, till all the little band  
Stood mustered gazing at the sunset way  
Whence he would come with store at close of day.  
He soothed the silly sheep with friendly tone  
And reared their staggering lambs that, older  
grown,  
Followed his steps with sense-taught memory;  
Till he, their shepherd, could their leader be  
And guide them through the pastures as he would,  
With sway that grew from ministry of good.  
He spread his tents upon the grassy plain  
Which, eastward widening like the open main,  
Showed the first whiteness 'neath the morning star;  
Near him his sister, deft, as women are,  
Plied her quick skill in sequence to his thought  
Till the hid treasures of the milk she caught  
Revealed like pollen 'mid the petals white,  
The golden pollen, virgin to the light.  
Even the she-wolf with young, on rapine bent,  
He caught and tethered in his mat-walled tent,  
And cherished all her little sharp-nosed young  
Till the small race with hope and terror clung  
About his footsteps, till each new-reared brood,  
Remoter from the memories of the wood,  
More glad discerned their common home with man.  
This was the work of Jabal: he began  
The pastoral life, and, sire of joys to be,  
Spread the sweet ties that bind the family  
O'er dear dumb souls that thrilled at man's caress,  
And shared his pains with patient helpfulness.  
But Tubal-Cain had caught and yoked the fire,  
Yoked it with stones that bent the flaming spire  
And made it roar in prisoned servitude  
Within the furnace, till with force subdued

It changed all forms he willed to work upon,  
 Till hard from soft, and soft from hard, he won.  
 The pliant clay he moulded as he would,  
 And laughed with joy when 'mid the heat it stood  
 Shaped as his hand had chosen, while the mass  
 That from his hold, dark, obstinate, would pass,  
 He drew all glowing from the busy heat,  
 All breathing as with life that he could beat  
 With thundering hammer, making it obey  
 His will creative, like the pale soft clay.  
 Each day he wrought and better than he planned,  
 Shape breeding shape beneath his restless hand.  
 (The soul without still helps the soul within,  
 And its deft magic ends what we begin.)  
 Nay, in his dreams his hammer he would wield  
 And seem to see a myriad types revealed,  
 Then spring with wondering triumphant cry,  
 And, lest the inspiring vision should go by,  
 Would rush to labour with that plastic zeal  
 Which all the passion of our life can steal  
 For force to work with. Each day saw the birth  
 Of various forms which, flung upon the earth,  
 Seemed harmless toys to cheat the exacting hour,  
 But were as seeds instinct with hidden power.  
 The axe, the club, the spikéd wheel, the chain,  
 Held silently the shrieks and moans of pain;  
 And near them latent lay in share and spade,  
 In the strong bar, the saw, and deep-curved blade,  
 Glad voices of the hearth and harvest-home,  
 The social good, and all earth's joy to come.  
 Thus to mixed ends wrought Tubal; and they say,  
 Some things he made have lasted to this day;  
 As, thirty silver pieces that were found  
 By Noah's children buried in the ground.  
 He made them from mere hunger of device,  
 Those small white disks; but they became the price

The traitor Judas sold his Master for;  
 And men still handling them in peace and war  
 Catch foul disease, that comes as appetite,  
 And lurks and clings as withering, damning blight.  
 But Tubal-Cain wot not of treachery,  
 Nor greedy lust, nor any ill to be,  
 Save the one ill of sinking into naught,  
 Banished from action and act-shaping thought.  
 He was the sire of swift-transforming skill,  
 Which arms for conquest man's ambitious will;  
 And round him gladly, as his hammer rung,  
 Gathered the elders and the growing young:  
 These handled vaguely and those plied the tools,  
 Till, happy chance begetting conscious rules,  
 The home of Cain with industry was rife,  
 And glimpses of a strong persistent life,  
 Panting through generations as one breath,  
 And filling with its soul the blank of death.

Jubal, too, watched the hammer, till his eyes,  
 No longer following its fall or rise,  
 Seemed glad with something that they could not  
 see,

But only listened to — some melody,  
 Wherein dumb longings inward speech had found,  
 Won from the common store of struggling sound.  
 Then, as the metal shapes more various grew,  
 And, hurled upon each other, resonance drew,  
 Each gave new tones, the revelations dim  
 Of some external soul that spoke for him:  
 The hollow vessel's clang, the clash, the boom,  
 Like light that makes wide spiritual room  
 And skyey spaces in the spaceless thought,  
 To Jubal such enlarged passion brought  
 That love, hope, rage, and all experience,  
 Were fused in vaster being, fetching thence



300 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Concords and discords, cadences and cries  
That seemed from some world-shrouded soul to rise,  
Some rapture more intense, some mightier rage,  
Some living sea that burst the bounds of man's  
brief age.

Then with such blissful trouble and glad care  
For growth within unborn as mothers bear,  
To the far woods he wandered, listening,  
And heard the birds their little stories sing  
In notes whose rise and fall seemed melted  
speech —

Melted with tears, smiles, glances — that can reach  
More quickly through our frame's deep-winding  
night,

And without thought raise thought's best fruit,  
delight.

Pondering, he sought his home again and heard  
The fluctuant changes of the spoken word:  
The deep remonstrance and the argued want,  
Insistent first in close monotonous chant,  
Next leaping upward to defiant stand  
Or downward beating like the resolute hand;  
The mother's call, the children's answering cry,  
The laugh's light cataract tumbling from on high;  
The suasive repetitions Jabal taught,  
That timid browsing cattle homeward brought;  
The clear-winged fugue of echoes vanishing;  
And through them all the hammer's rhythmic  
ring.

Jubal sat lonely, all around was dim,  
Yet his face glowed with light revealed to him:  
For as the delicate stream of odour wakes  
The thought-wed sentience and some image makes  
From out the mingled fragments of the past,  
Finely compact in wholeness that will last,



So streamed as from the body of each sound  
 Subtler pulsations, swift as warmth, which found  
 All prisoned germs and all their powers unbound,  
 Till thought self-luminous flamed from memory,  
 And in creative vision wandered free.

Then Jubal, standing, rapturous arms upraised,  
 And on the dark with eager eyes he gazed,  
 As had some manifested god been there.

It was his thought he saw: the presence fair  
 Of unachieved achievement, the high task,  
 The struggling unborn spirit that doth ask  
 With irresistible cry for blood and breath,  
 Till feeding its great life we sink in death.

He said, " Were now those mighty tones and cries  
 That from the giant soul of earth arise,  
 Those groans of some great travail heard from far,  
 Some power at wrestle with the things that are,  
 Those sounds which vary with the varying form  
 Of clay and metal, and in sightless swarm  
 Fill the wide space with tremors: were these wed  
 To human voices with such passion fed  
 As does put glimmer in our common speech,  
 But might flame out in tones whose changing  
 reach,

Surpassing meagre need, informs the sense  
 With fuller union, finer difference —  
 Were this great vision, now obscurely bright  
 As morning hills that melt in new-poured light,  
 Wrought into solid form and living sound,  
 Moving with ordered throb and sure rebound,  
 Then — Nay, I Jubal will that work begin!  
 The generations of our race shall win  
 New life, that grows from out the heart of this,  
 As spring from winter, or as lovers' bliss  
 From out the dull unknown of unawaked energies."

Thus he resolved and in the soul-fed light  
 Of coming ages waited through the night,  
 Watching for that near dawn whose chiller ray  
 Showed but the unchanged world of yesterday;  
 Where all the order of his dream divine  
 Lay like Olympian forms within the mine;  
 Where fervour that could fill the earthly round  
 With throngéd joys of form-begotten sound  
 Must shrink intense within the patient power  
 That lonely labours through the niggard hour.  
 Such patience have the heroes who begin,  
 Sailing the first to lands which others win.  
 Jubal must dare as great beginners dare,  
 Strike form's first way in matter rude and bare,  
 And, yearning vaguely toward the plenteous quire  
 Of the world's harvest, make one poor small lyre.  
 He made it, and from out its measured frame  
 Drew the harmonic soul, whose answers came  
 With guidance sweet and lessons of delight  
 Teaching to ear and hand the blissful Right,  
 Where strictest law is gladness to the sense  
 And all desire bends toward obedience.

Then Jubal poured his triumph in a song —  
 The rapturous word that rapturous notes pro-  
     long  
 As radiance streams from smallest things that  
     burn,  
 Or thought of loving into love doth turn.  
 And still his lyre gave companionship  
 In sense-taught concert as of lip with lip.  
 Alone amid the hills at first he tried  
 His wingéd song; then with adoring pride  
 And bridegroom's joy at leading forth his bride,  
 He said, "This wonder which my soul hath found,  
 This heart of music in the might of sound,

Shall forthwith be the share of all our race  
 And like the morning gladden common space:  
 The song shall spread and swell as rivers do,  
 And I will teach our youth with skill to woo  
 This living lyre, to know its secret will,  
 Its fine division of the good and ill.  
 So shall men call me sire of harmony,  
 And where great Song is, there my life shall be."

Thus glorying as a god beneficent,  
 Forth from his solitary joy he went  
 To bless mankind. It was at evening,  
 When shadows lengthen from each westward thing,  
 When imminence of change makes sense more fine  
 And light seems holier in its grand decline.  
 The fruit-trees wore their studded coronal,  
 Earth and her children were at festival,  
 Glowing as with one heart and one consent —  
 Thought, love, trees, rocks, in sweet warm radiance  
 blent.

The tribe of Cain was resting on the ground,  
 The various ages wreathed in one broad round.  
 Here lay, while children peeped o'er his huge  
 thighs,  
 The sinewy man embrowned by centuries;  
 Here the broad-bosomed mother of the strong  
 Looked, like Demeter, placid o'er the throng  
 Of young lithe forms whose rest was movement  
 too —  
 Tricks, prattle, nods, and laughs that lightly flew,  
 And swayings as of flower-beds where Love blew.  
 For all had feasted well upon the flesh  
 Of juicy fruits, on nuts, and honey fresh,  
 And now their wine was health-bred merriment,  
 Which through the generations circling went,

Leaving none sad, for even father Cain  
 Smiled as a Titan might, despising pain.  
 Jabal sat climbed on by a playful ring  
 Of children, lambs, and whelps, whose gambolling,  
 With tiny hoofs, paws, hands, and dimpled feet,  
 Made barks, bleats, laughs, in pretty hubbub meet.  
 But Tubal's hammer rang from far away,  
 Tubal alone would keep no holiday,  
 His furnace must not slack for any feast,  
 For of all hardship work he counted least;  
 He scorned all rest but sleep, where every dream  
 Made his repose more potent action seem.

Yet with health's nectar some strange thirst was  
 blent,  
 The fateful growth, the unnamed discontent,  
 The inward shaping toward some unborn power,  
 Some deeper-breathing act, the being's flower.  
 After all gestures, words, and speech of eyes,  
 The soul had more to tell, and broke in sighs.  
 Then from the east, with glory on his head  
 Such as low-slanting beams on corn-waves spread,  
 Came Jubal with his lyre: there 'mid the throng,  
 Where the blank space was, poured a solemn song,  
 Touching his lyre to full harmonic throb  
 And measured pulse, with cadences that sob,  
 Exult and cry, and search the inmost deep  
 Where the dark sources of new passion sleep.  
 Joy took the air, and took each breathing soul,  
 Embracing them in one entranced whole,  
 Yet thrilled each varying frame to various ends,  
 As Spring new-waking through the creature sends  
 Or rage or tenderness; more plenteous life  
 Here breeding dread, and there a fiercer strife.  
 He who had lived through twice three centuries,  
 Whose months monotonous, like trees on trees,



In hoary forests, stretched a backward maze,  
 Dreamed himself dimly through the travelled days  
 Till in clear light he paused, and felt the sun  
 That warmed him when he was a little one;  
 Felt that true heaven, the recovered past,  
 The dear small Known amid the Unknown vast,  
 And in that heaven wept. But younger limbs  
 Thrilled toward the future, that bright land which  
 swims

In western glory, isles and streams and bays,  
 Where hidden pleasures float in golden haze.  
 And in all these the rhythmic influence,  
 Sweetly o'ercharging the delighted sense,  
 Flowed out in movements, little waves that spread  
 Enlarging, till in tidal union led  
 The youths and maidens both alike long-tressed,  
 By grace-inspiring melody possessed,  
 Rose in slow dance, with beauteous floating swerve  
 Of limbs and hair, and many a melting curve  
 Of ringéd feet swayed by each close-linked palm:  
 Then Jubal poured more rapture in his psalm,  
 The dance fired music, music fired the dance,  
 The glow diffusive lit each countenance,  
 Till all the gazing elders rose and stood  
 With glad yet awful shock of that mysterious  
 good.

Even Tubal caught the sound, and wondering  
 came,

Urging his sooty bulk like smoke-wrapt flame  
 Till he could see his brother with the lyre,  
 The work for which he lent his furnace-fire  
 And diligent hammer, witting naught of this —  
 This power in metal shape which made strange  
 bliss,

Entering within him like a dream full-fraught  
 With new creations finished in a thought.



306 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

The sun had sunk, but music still was there,  
And when this ceased, still triumph filled the air:  
It seemed the stars were shining with delight  
And that no night was ever like this night.  
All clung with praise to Jubal: some besought  
That he would teach them his new skill: some  
caught,

Swiftly as smiles are caught in looks that meet,  
The tone's melodic change and rhythmic beat:  
'T was easy following where invention trod —  
All eyes can see when light flows out from God.

And thus did Jubal to his race reveal  
Music their larger soul, where woe and weal  
Filling the resonant chords, the song, the dance,  
Moved with a wider-wingéd utterance.  
Now many a lyre was fashioned, many a song  
Raised echoes new, old echoes to prolong,  
Till things of Jubal's making were so rife,  
"Hearing myself," he said, "hems in my life,  
And I will get me to some far-off land,  
Where higher mountains under heaven stand  
And touch the blue at rising of the stars,  
Whose song they hear where no rough mingling  
mars

The great clear voices. Such lands there must be,  
Where varying forms make varying symphony —  
Where other thunders roll amid the hills,  
Some mightier wind a mightier forest fills  
With other strains through other-shapen boughs;  
Where bees and birds and beasts that hunt or  
browse

Will teach me songs I know not. Listening there,  
My life shall grow like trees both tall and fair  
That rise and spread and bloom toward fuller fruit  
each year."

He took a raft, and travelled with the stream  
 Southward for many a league, till he might deem  
 He saw at last the pillars of the sky,  
 Beholding mountains whose white majesty  
 Rushed through him as new awe, and made new  
 song

That swept with fuller wave the chords along,  
 Weighting his voice with deep religious chime,  
 The iteration of slow chant sublime.

It was the region long inhabited

By all the race of Seth; and Jubal said:

“Here have I found my thirsty soul’s desire,  
 Eastward the hills touch heaven, and evening’s  
 fire

Flames through deep waters; I will take my rest,  
 And feed anew from my great mother’s breast,  
 The sky-clasped Earth, whose voices nurture me  
 As the flowers’ sweetness doth the honey-bee.”  
 He lingered wandering for many an age,  
 And, sowing music, made high heritage  
 For generations far beyond the Flood —  
 For the poor late-begotten human brood  
 Born to life’s weary brevity and perilous good.

And ever as he travelled he would climb  
 The farthest mountain, yet the heavenly chime,  
 The mighty tolling of the far-off spheres  
 Beating their pathway, never touched his ears.  
 But wheresoe’er he rose the heavens rose.  
 And the far-gazing mountain could disclose  
 Naught but a wider earth; until one height  
 Showed him the ocean stretched in liquid light,  
 And he could hear its multitudinous roar,  
 Its plunge and hiss upon the pebbled shore:  
 Then Jubal silent sat, and touched his lyre no  
 more.

### 308 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

He thought, "The world is great, but I am weak,  
And where the sky bends is no solid peak  
To give me footing, but instead, this main —  
Myriads of maddened horses thundering o'er the  
plain.

"New voices come to me where'er I roam,  
My heart too widens with its widening home:  
But song grows weaker, and the heart must break  
For lack of voice, or fingers that can wake  
The lyre's full answer; nay, its chords were all  
Too few to meet the growing spirit's call.  
The former songs seem little, yet no more  
Can soul, hand, voice, with interchanging lore  
Tell what the earth is saying unto me:  
The secret is too great, I hear confusedly.

"No farther will I travel: once again  
My brethren I will see, and that fair plain  
Where I and Song were born. There fresh-voiced  
youth  
Will pour my strains with all the early truth  
Which now abides not in my voice and hands,  
But only in the soul, the will that stands  
Helpless to move. My tribe remembering  
Will cry "'T is he!' and run to greet me, wel-  
coming."

The way was weary. Many a date-palm grew,  
And shook out clustered gold against the blue,  
While Jubal, guided by the steadfast spheres,  
Sought the dear home of those first eager years,  
When, with fresh vision fed, the fuller will  
Took living outward shape in pliant skill;  
For still he hoped to find the former things,  
And the warm gladness recognition brings.

His footsteps erred among the mazy woods  
 And long illusive sameness of the floods,  
 Winding and wandering. Through far regions  
     strange  
 With Gentile homes and faces, did he range,  
 And left his music in their memory,  
 And left at last, when naught besides would free  
 His homeward steps from clinging hands and cries,  
 The ancient lyre. And now in ignorant eyes  
 No sign remained of Jubal, Lamech's son,  
 That mortal frame wherein was first begun  
 The immortal life of song. His withered brow  
 Pressed over eyes that held no lightning now,  
 His locks streamed whiteness on the hurrying air,  
 The unresting soul had worn itself quite bare  
 Of beauteous token, as the outworn might  
 Of oaks slow dying, gaunt in summer's light.  
 His full deep voice toward thinnest treble ran:  
 He was the rune-writ story of a man.

And so at last he neared the well-known land,  
 Could see the hills in ancient order stand  
 With friendly faces whose familiar gaze  
 Looked through the sunshine of his childish days;  
 Knew the deep-shadowed folds of hanging woods,  
 And seemed to see the selfsame insect broods  
 Whirling and quivering o'er the flowers — to hear  
 The selfsame cuckoo making distance near.  
 Yea, the dear Earth, with mother's constancy,  
 Met and embraced him, and said, "Thou art he!  
 This was thy cradle, here my breast was thine,  
 Where feeding, thou didst all thy life entwine  
 With my sky-wedded life in heritage divine."

But wending ever through the watered plain,  
 Firm not to rest save in the home of Cain,



### 310 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

He saw dread Change, with dubious face and cold  
That never kept a welcome for the old,  
Like some strange heir upon the hearth, arise  
Saying, "This home is mine." He thought his  
eyes

Mocked all deep memories, as things new made,  
Usurping sense, make old things shrink and fade  
And seem ashamed to meet the staring day.  
His memory saw a small foot-trodden way,  
His eyes a broad far-stretching paven road  
Bordered with many a tomb and fair abode;  
The little city that once nestled low  
As buzzing groups about some central glow,  
Spread like a murmuring crowd o'er plain and  
steep,

Or monster huge in heavy-breathing sleep.  
His heart grew faint, and tremblingly he sank  
Close by the wayside on a weed-grown bank,  
Not far from where a new-raised temple stood,  
Sky-roofed, and fragrant with wrought cedar wood.  
The morning sun was high; his rays fell hot  
On this hap-chosen, dusty, common spot,  
On the dry-withered grass and withered man:  
That wondrous frame where melody began  
Lay as a tomb defaced that no eye cared to scan.

But while he sank far music reached his ear.  
He listened until wonder silenced fear  
And gladness wonder; for the broadening stream  
Of sound advancing was his early dream,  
Brought like fulfilment of forgotten prayer;  
As if his soul, breathed out upon the air,  
Had held the invisible seeds of harmony  
Quick with the various strains of life to be.  
He listened: the sweet mingled difference  
With charm alternate took the meeting sense;



Then bursting like some shield-broad lily red,  
 Sudden and near the trumpet's notes outspread,  
 And soon his eyes could see the metal flower,  
 Shining upturned, out on the morning pour  
 Its incense audible; could see a train  
 From out the street slow-winding on the plain  
 With lyres and cymbals, flutes and psalteries,  
 While men, youths, maids, in concert sang to these  
 With various throat, or in succession poured,  
 Or in full volume mingled. But one word  
 Ruled each recurrent rise and answering fall,  
 As when the multitudes adoring call  
 On some great name divine, their common soul,  
 The common need, love, joy, that knits them in  
 one whole.

The word was "Jubal!" . . . "Jubal" filled the  
 air

And seemed to ride aloft, a spirit there,  
 Creator of the quire, the full-fraught strain  
 That grateful rolled itself to him again.  
 The aged man adust upon the bank —  
 Whom no eye saw — at first with rapture drank  
 The bliss of music, then, with swelling heart,  
 Felt this was his own being's greater part,  
 The universal joy once born in him.  
 But when the train, with living face and limb  
 And vocal breath, came nearer and more near,  
 The longing grew that they should hold him dear;  
 Him, Lamech's son, whom all their fathers knew,  
 The breathing Jubal — him, to whom their love  
 was due.

All was forgotten but the burning need  
 To claim his fuller self, to claim the deed  
 That lived away from him, and grew apart,  
 While he as from a tomb, with lonely heart,

Warmed by no meeting glance, no hand that  
pressed,

Lay chill amid the life his life had blessed.

What though his song should spread from man's  
small race

Out through the myriad worlds that people space,  
And make the heavens one joy-diffusing quire? —

Still 'mid that vast would throb the keen desire

Of this poor aged flesh, this eventide,

This twilight soon in darkness to subside,

This little pulse of self that, having glowed

Through thrice three centuries, and divinely  
stowed

The light of music through the vague of sound,

Ached with its smallness still in good that had no  
bound.

For no eye saw him, while with loving pride

Each voice with each in praise of Jubal vied.

Must he in conscious trance, dumb, helpless lie

While all that ardent kindred passed him by?

His flesh cried out to live with living men

And join that soul which to the inward ken

Of all the hymning train was present there.

Strong passion's daring sees not aught to dare:

The frost-locked starkness of his frame low-bent,

His voice's penury of tones long spent,

He felt not; all his being leaped in flame

To meet his kindred as they onward came

Slackening and wheeling toward the temple's face:

He rushed before them to the glittering space,

And, with a strength that was but strong desire,

Cried, "I am Jubal, I! . . . I made the lyre!"

The tones amid a lake of silence fell

Broken and strained, as if a feeble bell

Had tuneless pealed the triumph of a land  
 To listening crowds in expectation spanned.  
 Sudden came showers of laughter on that lake;  
 They spread along the train from front to wake  
 In one great storm of merriment, while he  
 Shrank doubting whether he could Jubal be,  
 And not a dream of Jubal, whose rich vein  
 Of passionate music came with that dream-pain  
 Wherein the sense slips off from each loved thing  
 And all appearance is mere vanishing.  
 But ere the laughter died from out the rear,  
 Anger in front saw profanation near;  
 Jubal was but a name in each man's faith  
 For glorious power untouched by that slow death  
 Which creeps with creeping time; this too, the spot,  
 And this the day, it must be crime to blot,  
 Even with scoffing at a madman's lie:  
 Jubal was not a name to wed with mockery.  
 Two rushed upon him: two, the most devout  
 In honour of great Jubal, thrust him out,  
 And beat him with their flutes. 'T was little need;  
 He strove not, cried not, but with tottering speed,  
 As if the scorn and howls were driving wind  
 That urged his body, serving so the mind  
 Which could but shrink and yearn, he sought the  
     screen  
 Of thorny thickets, and there fell unseen.  
 The immortal name of Jubal filled the sky,  
 While Jubal lonely laid him down to die.  
 He said within his soul, " This is the end:  
 O'er all the earth to where the heavens bend  
 And hem men's travel, I have breathed my soul:  
 I lie here now the remnant of that whole,  
 The embers of a life, a lonely pain;  
 As far-off rivers to my thirst were vain,  
 So of my mighty years naught comes to me again.

314 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

“ Is the day sinking? Softest coolness springs  
From something round me: dewy shadowy wings  
Enclose me all around — no, not above —  
Is moonlight there? I see a face of love,  
Fair as sweet music when my heart was strong:  
Yea — art thou come again to me, great Song? ”

The face bent over him like silver night  
In long-remembered summers; that calm light  
Of days which shine in firmaments of thought,  
That past unchangeable, from change still wrought.  
And gentlest tones were with the vision blent:  
He knew not if that gaze the music sent,  
Or music that calm gaze: to hear, to see,  
Was but one undivided ecstasy:  
The raptured senses melted into one,  
And parting life a moment's freedom won  
From in and outer, as a little child  
Sits on a bank and sees blue heavens mild  
Down in the water, and forgets its limbs,  
And knoweth naught save the blue heaven that  
swims.

“ Jubal,” the face said, “ I am thy loved Past,  
The soul that makes thee one from first to last.  
I am the angel of thy life and death,  
Thy outbreathed being drawing its last breath.  
Am I not thine alone, a dear dead bride  
Who blest thy lot above all men's beside?  
Thy bride whom thou wouldst never change, nor  
take  
Any bride living, for that dead one's sake?  
Was I not all thy yearning and delight,  
Thy chosen search, thy senses' beauteous Right,  
Which still had been the hunger of thy frame  
In central heaven, hadst thou been still the same? ”



Wouldst thou have asked aught else from any  
god —

Whether with gleaming feet on earth he trod  
Or thundered through the skies — aught else for  
share

Of mortal good, than in thy soul to bear  
The growth of song, and feel the sweet unrest  
Of the world's spring-tide in thy conscious breast?  
No, thou hadst grasped thy lot with all its pain,  
Nor loosed it any painless lot to gain  
Where music's voice was silent; for thy fate  
Was human music's self incorporate:  
Thy senses' keenness and thy passionate strife  
Were flesh of *her* flesh and her womb of life.  
And greatly hast thou lived, for not alone  
With hidden raptures were her secrets shown,  
Buried within thee, as the purple light  
Of gems may sleep in solitary night;  
But thy expanding joy was still to give,  
And with the generous air in song to live,  
Feeding the wave of ever-widening bliss  
Where fellowship means equal perfectness.  
And on the mountains in thy wandering  
Thy feet were beautiful as blossomed spring,  
That turns the leafless wood to love's glad home,  
For with thy coming Melody was come.  
This was thy lot, to feel, create, bestow,  
And that immeasurable life to know  
From which the fleshly self falls shrivelled, dead,  
A seed primeval that has forests bred.  
It is the glory of the heritage  
Thy life has left, that makes thy outcast age:  
Thy limbs shall lie dark, tombless on this sod,  
Because thou shinest in man's soul, a god,  
Who found and gave new passion and new joy  
That naught but Earth's destruction can destroy.



316 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Thy gifts to give was thine of men alone:  
'T was but in giving that thou couldst atone  
For too much wealth amid their poverty."

The words seemed melting into symphony,  
The wings upbore him, and the gazing song  
Was floating him the heavenly space along,  
Where mighty harmonies all gently fell  
Through veiling vastness, like the far-off bell,  
Till, ever onward through the choral blue,  
He heard more faintly and more faintly knew,  
Quitting mortality, a quenched sun-wave,  
The All-creating Presence for his grave.

1869

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## AGATHA

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**C**OME with me to the mountain, not where  
rocks  
Soar harsh above the troops of hurrying  
pines,  
But where the earth spreads soft and rounded  
breasts  
To feed her children; where the generous hills  
Lift a green isle betwixt the sky and plain  
To keep some Old World things aloof from change.  
Here too 't is hill and hollow: new-born streams  
With sweet enforcement, joyously compelled  
Like laughing children, hurry down the steeps,  
And make a dimpled chase athwart the stones;  
Pine woods are black upon the heights, the slopes  
Are green with pasture, and the bearded corn  
Fringes the blue above the sudden ridge:  
A little world whose round horizon cuts  
This isle of hills with heaven for a sea,  
Save in clear moments when southwestward gleams  
France by the Rhine, melting anon to haze.  
The monks of old chose here their still retreat,  
And called it by the Blessed Virgin's name,  
Sancta Maria, which the peasant's tongue,  
Speaking from out the parent's heart that turns  
All loved things into little things, has made  
Sanct Märgen — Holy little Mary, dear  
As all the sweet home things she smiles upon,  
The children and the cows, the apple-trees,  
The cart, the plough, all named with that caress  
Which feigns them little, easy to be held,  
Familiar to the eyes and hand and heart.

What though a Queen? She puts her crown away  
 And with her little Boy wears common clothes,  
 Caring for common wants, remembering  
 That day when good Saint Joseph left his work  
 To marry her with humble trust sublime.  
 The monks are gone, their shadows fall no more  
 Tall-froked and cowed athwart the evening fields  
 At milking-time; their silent corridors  
 Are turned to homes of bare-armed, aproned men,  
 Who toil for wife and children. But the bells,  
 Pealing on high from two quaint convent towers,  
 Still ring the Catholic signals, summoning  
 To grave remembrance of the larger life  
 That bears our own, like perishable fruit  
 Upon its heaven-wide branches. At their sound  
 The shepherd boy far off upon the hill,  
 The workers with the saw and at the forge,  
 The triple generation round the hearth —  
 Grandames and mothers and the flute-voiced  
 girls —

Fall on their knees and send forth prayerful cries  
 To the kind Mother with the little Boy,  
 Who pleads for helpless men against the storm,  
 Lightning and plagues and all terrific shapes  
 Of power supreme.

Within the prettiest hollow of these hills,  
 Just as you enter it, upon the slope  
 Stands a low cottage neighboured cheerily  
 By running water, which, at farthest end  
 Of the same hollow, turns a heavy mill,  
 And feeds the pasture for the miller's cows,  
 Bianchi and Nægeli, Veilchen and the rest,  
 Matrons with faces as Griselda mild,  
 Coming at call. And on the farthest height  
 A little tower looks out above the pines  
 Where mounting you will find a sanctuary

Open and still; without, the silent crowd  
Of heaven-planted, incense-mingling flowers;  
Within, the altar where the Mother sits  
'Mid votive tablets hung from far-off years  
By peasants succoured in the peril of fire,  
Fever, or flood, who thought that Mary's love,  
Willing but not omnipotent, had stood  
Between their lives and that dread power which slew  
Their neighbour at their side. The chapel bell  
Will melt to gentlest music ere it reach  
That cottage on the slope, whose garden gate  
Has caught the rose-tree boughs and stands ajar;  
So does the door, to let the sunbeams in;  
For in the slanting sunbeams angels come  
And visit Agatha who dwells within —  
Old Agatha, whose cousins Kate and Nell  
Are housed by her in Love and Duty's name,  
They being feeble, with small withered wits,  
And she believing that the higher gift  
Was given to be shared. So Agatha,  
Shares her one room, all neat on afternoons,  
As if some memory were sacred there  
And everything within the four low walls  
An honoured relic.

One long summer's day

An angel entered at the rose-hung gate,  
With skirts pale blue, a brow to quench the pearl,  
Hair soft and blonde as infants', plenteous  
As hers who made the wavy lengths once speak  
The grateful worship of a rescued soul.  
The angel paused before the open door  
To give good day. "Come in," said Agatha.  
I followed close, and watched and listened there.  
The angel was a lady, noble, young,  
Taught in all seemliness that fits a court,

All lore that shapes the mind to delicate use,  
 Yet quiet, lowly, as a meek white dove  
 That with its presence teaches gentleness.  
 Men called her Countess Linda; little girls  
 In Freiburg town, orphans whom she caressed,  
 Said Mamma Linda: yet her years were few,  
 Her outward beauties all in budding time,  
 Her virtues the aroma of the plant  
 That dwells in all its being, root, stem, leaf,  
 And waits not ripeness.

“Sit,” said Agatha.

Her cousins were at work in neighbouring homes  
 But yet she was not lonely; all things round  
 Seemed filled with noiseless yet responsive life,  
 As of a child at breast that gently clings:  
 Not sunlight only or the breathing flowers  
 Or the swift shadows of the birds and bees,  
 But all the household goods, which, polished fair  
 By hands that cherished them for service done,  
 Shone as with glad content. The wooden beams  
 Dark and yet friendly, easy to be reached,  
 Bore three white crosses for a speaking sign;  
 The walls had little pictures hung a-row,  
 Telling the stories of Saint Ursula,  
 And Saint Elizabeth, the lowly queen;  
 And on the bench that served for table too,  
 Skirting the wall to save the narrow space,  
 There lay the Catholic books, inherited  
 From those old times when printing still was young  
 With stout-limbed promise, like a sturdy boy.  
 And in the farthest corner stood the bed  
 Where o’er the pillow hung two pictures wreathed  
 With fresh-plucked ivy: one the Virgin’s death,  
 And one her flowering tomb, while high above  
 She smiling bends and lets her girdle down



For ladder to the soul that cannot trust  
In life which outlasts burial. Agatha  
Sat at her knitting, aged, upright, slim,  
And spoke her welcome with mild dignity.  
She kept the company of kings and queens  
And mitred saints who sat below the feet  
Of Francis with the ragged frock and wounds;  
And Rank for her meant Duty, various,  
Yet equal in its worth, done worthily.  
Command was service; humblest service done  
By willing and discerning soul was glory.  
Fair Countess Linda sat upon the bench,  
Close fronting the old knitter, and they talked  
With sweet antiphony of young and old.

## AGATHA

You like our valley, lady? I am glad  
You thought it well to come again. But rest —  
The walk is long from Master Michael's inn.

## COUNTESS LINDA

Yes, but no walk is prettier.

## AGATHA

It is true:  
There lacks no blessing here, the waters all  
Have virtues like the garments of the Lord,  
And heal much sickness; then, the crops and cows  
Flourish past speaking, and the garden flowers,  
Pink, blue, and purple, 't is a joy to see  
How they yield honey for the singing bees.  
I would the whole world were as good a home.

## COUNTESS LINDA

And you are well off, Agatha? — your friends  
Left you a certain bread: is it not so?

## AGATHA

Not so at all, dear lady. I had naught,  
 Was a poor orphan; but I came to tend  
 Here in this house, an old afflicted pair,  
 Who wore out slowly; and the last who died,  
 Full thirty years ago, left me this roof  
 And all the household stuff. It was great wealth,  
 And so I had a home for Kate and Nell.

## COUNTESS LINDA

But how, then, have you earned your daily bread  
 These thirty years?

## AGATHA

Oh, that is easy earning.  
 We help the neighbours, and our bit and sup  
 Is never failing: they have work for us  
 In house and field, all sorts of odds and ends,  
 Patching and mending, turning o'er the hay,  
 Holding sick children — there is always work;  
 And they are very good — the neighbours are:  
 Weigh not our bits of work with weight and scale,  
 But glad themselves with giving us good shares  
 Of meat and drink; and in the big farmhouse  
 When cloth comes home from weaving, the good  
 wife  
 Cuts me a piece — this very gown — and says:  
 "Here, Agatha, you old maid, you have time  
 To pray for Hans who is gone soldiering:  
 The saints might help him, and they have much to  
 do,  
 'T were well they were besought to think of him."  
 She spoke half jesting, but I pray, I pray  
 For poor young Hans. I take it much to heart

That other people are worse off than I —  
I ease my soul with praying for them all.

## COUNTESS LINDA

That is your way of singing, Agatha;  
Just as the nightingales pour forth sad songs,  
And when they reach men's ears they make men's  
    hearts  
Feel the more kindly.

## AGATHA

    Nay, I cannot sing:  
My voice is hoarse, and oft I think my prayers  
Are foolish, feeble things; for Christ is good  
Whether I pray or not — the Virgin's heart  
Is kinder far than mine; and then I stop  
And feel I can do naught toward helping men,  
Till out it comes, like tears that will not hold,  
And I must pray again for all the world.  
'T is good to me — I mean the neighbours are:  
To Kate and Nell too. I have money saved  
To go on pilgrimage the second time.

## COUNTESS LINDA

And do you mean to go on pilgrimage  
With all your years to carry, Agatha?

## AGATHA

The years are light; dear lady: 't is my sins  
Are heavier than I would. And I shall go  
All the way to Einsiedeln with that load.  
I need to work it off.

## COUNTESS LINDA

What sort of sins,  
Dear Agatha? I think they must be small.

## AGATHA

Nay, but they may be greater than I know;  
'T is but dim light I see by. So I try  
All ways I know of to be cleansed and pure.  
I would not sink where evil spirits are.  
There's perfect goodness somewhere: so I strive.

## COUNTESS LINDA

You were the better for that pilgrimage  
You made before? The shrine is beautiful;  
And then you saw fresh country all the way.

## AGATHA

Yes, that is true. And ever since that time  
The world seems greater, and the Holy Church  
More wonderful. The blessed pictures all,  
The heavenly images with books and wings,  
Are company to me through the day and night.  
The time! the time! It never seemed far back,  
Only to father's father and his kin  
That lived before him. But the time stretched  
out  
After that pilgrimage: I seemed to see  
Far back, and yet I knew time lay behind,  
As there are countries lying still behind  
The highest mountains, there in Switzerland.  
Oh, it is great to go on pilgrimage!

## COUNTESS LINDA

Perhaps some neighbours will be pilgrims too,  
And you can start together in a band.

## AGATHA

Not from these hills: people are busy here,  
 The beasts want tendance. One who is not missed  
 Can go and pray for others who must work.  
 I owe it to all neighbours, young and old;  
 For they are good past thinking — lads and girls  
 Given to mischief, merry naughtiness,  
 Quiet it, as the hedgehogs smooth their spines,  
 For fear of hurting poor old Agatha.  
 'T is pretty: why, the cherubs in the sky  
 Look young and merry, and the angels play  
 On citherns, lutes, and all sweet instruments.  
 I would have young things merry. See the Lord!  
 A little baby playing with the birds;  
 And how the Blessed Mother smiles at him.

## COUNTESS LINDA

I think you are too happy, Agatha,  
 To care for heaven. Earth contents you well.

## AGATHA

Nay, nay, I shall be called, and I shall go  
 Right willingly. I shall get helpless, blind,  
 Be like an old stalk to be plucked away:  
 The garden must be cleared for young spring  
 plants.  
 'T is home beyond the grave, the most are there,  
 All those we pray to, all the Church's lights —  
 And poor old souls are welcome in their rags:  
 One sees it by the pictures. Good Saint Ann,  
 The Virgin's mother, she is very old,  
 And had her troubles with her husband too.  
 Poor Kate and Nell are younger far than I,  
 But they will have this roof to cover them.



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I shall go willingly; and willingness  
Makes the yoke easy and the burden light.

COUNTESS LINDA

When you go southward in your pilgrimage,  
Come to see me in Freiburg, Agatha.  
Where you have friends you should not go to inns.

AGATHA

Yes, I will gladly come to see you, lady,  
And you will give me sweet hay for a bed.  
And in the morning I shall wake betimes  
And start when all the birds begin to sing.

COUNTESS LINDA

You wear your smart clothes on the pilgrimage,  
Such pretty clothes as all the women here  
Keep by them for their best: a velvet cap  
And collar golden-broidered? They look well  
On old and young alike.

AGATHA

Nay, I have none —  
Never had better clothes than these you see.  
Good clothes are pretty, but one sees them best  
When others wear them, and I somehow thought  
'T was not worth while. I had so many things  
More than some neighbours, I was partly shy  
Of wearing better clothes than they, and now  
I am so old and custom is so strong  
'T would hurt me sore to put on finery.

COUNTESS LINDA

Your gray hair is a crown, dear Agatha.  
Shake hands; good-bye. The sun is going down.  
And I must see the glory from the hill.

I stayed among those hills; and oft heard more  
Of Agatha. I liked to hear her name,  
As that of one half grandame and half saint,  
Uttered with reverent playfulness. The lads  
And younger men all called her mother, aunt,  
Or granny, with their pet diminutives,  
And bade their lasses and their brides behave  
Right well to one who surely made a link  
'Twixt faulty folk and God by loving both:  
Not one but counted service done by her,  
Asking no pay save just her daily bread.  
At feasts and weddings, when they passed in  
groups

Along the vale, and the good country wine,  
Being vocal in them, made them quire along  
In quaintly mingled mirth and piety,  
They fain must jest and play some friendly trick  
On three old maids; but when the moment came  
Always they bated breath and made their sport  
Gentle as feather-stroke, that Agatha  
Might like the waking for the love it showed.  
Their song made happy music 'mid the hills,  
For nature tuned their race to harmony,  
And poet Hans, the tailor, wrote them songs  
That grew from out their life, as crocuses  
From out the meadow's moistness. 'T was his song  
They oft sang, wending homeward from a feast —  
The song I give you. It brings in, you see,  
Their gentle jesting with the three old maids.

Midnight by the chapel bell!  
Homeward, homeward all, farewell!  
I with you, and you with me,  
Miles are short with company.

*Heart of Mary, bless the way,  
Keep us all by night and day!*

Moon and stars at feast with night  
 Now have drunk their fill of light.  
 Home they hurry, making time  
 Trot apace, like merry rhyme.

*Heart of Mary, mystic rose,  
 Send us all a sweet repose!*

Swiftly through the wood down hill,  
 Run till you can hear the mill.  
 Toni's ghost is wandering now,  
 Shaped just like a snow-white cow.

*Heart of Mary, morning star,  
 Ward off danger, near or far!*

Toni's wagon with its load  
 Fell and crushed him in the road  
 'Twi'x't these pine-trees. Never fear!  
 Give a neighbour's ghost good cheer.

*Holy Babe, our God and Brother,  
 Bind us fast to one another!*

Hark! the mill is at its work,  
 Now we pass beyond the murk  
 To the hollow, where the moon  
 Makes her silvery afternoon.

*Good Saint Joseph, faithful spouse,  
 Help us all to keep our vows!*

Here the three old maidens dwell,  
 Agatha and Kate and Nell;  
 See, the moon shines on the thatch,  
 We will go and shake the latch.

*Heart of Mary, cup of joy,  
 Give us mirth without alloy!*

Hush, 't is here, no noise, sing low,  
Rap with gentle knuckles — so!  
Like the little tapping birds,  
On the door; then sing good words.  
*Meek Saint Anna, old and fair,  
Hallow all the snow-white hair!*

Little maidens old, sweet dreams!  
Sleep one sleep till morning beams.  
Mothers ye, who help us all,  
Quick at hand, if ill befall.  
*Holy Gabriel, lily-laden,  
Bless the aged mother-maiden!*

Forward, mount the broad hillside  
Swift as soldiers when they ride.  
See the two towers how they peep,  
Round-capped giants, o'er the steep.  
*Heart of Mary, by thy sorrow,  
Keep us upright through the morrow!*

Now they rise quite suddenly  
Like a man from bended knee,  
Now Saint Märgen is in sight.  
Here the roads branch off — good-night.  
*Heart of Mary, by thy grace,  
Give us with the saints a place!*

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## ARMGART

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### SCENE I

*A Salon lit with lamps and ornamented with green plants. An open piano, with many scattered sheets of music. Bronze busts of Beethoven and Gluck on pillars opposite each other. A small table spread with supper. To FRÄULEIN WALPURGA, who advances with a slight lameness of gait from an adjoining room, enters GRAF DORNBERG at the opposite door in a travelling dress.*

GRAF

Good-morning, Fräulein!

WALPURGA

What, so soon returned?  
I feared your mission kept you still at Prague.

GRAF

But now arrived! You see my travelling dress.  
I hurried from the panting, roaring steam  
Like any courier of embassy  
Who hides the fiends of war within his bag.

WALPURGA

You know that Armgart sings to-night?

GRAF

Has sung!  
'T is close on half-past nine. The *Orpheus*



Lasts not so long. Her spirits — were they high?  
Was Leo confident?

## WALPURGA

He only feared  
Some tameness at beginning. Let the house  
Once ring, he said, with plaudits, she is safe.

## GRAF

And Armgart?

## WALPURGA

She was stiller than her wont.  
But once, at some such trivial word of mine,  
As that the highest prize might yet be won  
By her who took the second — she was roused.  
“For me,” she said, “I triumph or I fail.  
I never strove for any second prize.”

## GRAF

Poor human-hearted singing-bird! She bears  
Cæsar's ambition in her delicate breast,  
And naught to still it with but quivering song!

## WALPURGA

I had not for the world been there to-night:  
Unreasonable dread oft chills me more  
Than any reasonable hope can warm.

## GRAF

You have a rare affection for your cousin;  
As tender as a sister's.

## WALPURGA

Nay, I fear  
 My love is little more than what I felt  
 For happy stories when I was a child.  
 She fills my life that would be empty else,  
 And lifts my naught to value by her side.

## GRAF

She is reason good enough, or seems to be,  
 Why all were born whose being ministers  
 To her completeness. Is it most her voice  
 Subdues us? or her instinct exquisite,  
 Informing each old strain with some new grace  
 Which takes our sense like any natural good?  
 Or most her spiritual energy  
 That sweeps us in the current of her song?

## WALPURGA

I know not. Losing either, we should lose  
 That whole we call our Armgart. For herself  
 She often wonders what her life had been  
 Without that voice for channel to her soul.  
 She says, it must have leaped through all her  
 limbs —  
 Made her a Mænad — made her snatch a brand  
 And fire some forest, that her rage might mount  
 In crashing roaring flames through half a land,  
 Leaving her still and patient for a while.  
 “Poor wretch!” she says, of any murderess —  
 “The world was cruel, and she could not sing:  
 I carry my revenges in my throat;  
 I love in singing, and am loved again.”

GRAF

Mere mood! I cannot yet believe it more.  
 Too much ambition has unwomaned her;  
 But only for a while. Her nature hides  
 One half its treasures by its very wealth,  
 Taxing the hours to show it.

WALPURGA

Hark! she comes.

*(Enter LEO with a wreath in his hand, holding the door open for ARMGART, who wears a furred mantle and hood. She is followed by her maid, carrying an armful of bouquets.)*

LEO

Place for the queen of song!

GRAF *(advancing toward ARMGART, who throws off her hood and mantle, and shows a star of brilliants in her hair)*

A triumph, then.

You will not be a niggard of your joy  
 And chide the eagerness that came to share it.

ARMGART

O kind! you hastened your return for me.  
 I would you had been there to hear me sing!  
 Walpurga, kiss me: never tremble more  
 Lest Armgart's wing should fail her. She has  
 found  
 This night the region where her rapture  
 breathes —  
 Pouring her passion on the air made live

334 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

With human heart-throbs. Tell them, Leo, tell  
them

How I outsang your hope and made you cry  
Because Gluck could not hear me. That was folly!  
He sang, not listened: every linkéd note  
Was his immortal pulse that stirred in mine,  
And all my gladness is but part of him.  
Give me the wreath.

(*She crowns the bust of Gluck.*)

LEO (*sardonically*)

Ay, ay, but mark you this:  
It was not part of him — that trill you made  
In spite of me and reason!

ARMGART

You were wrong —  
Dear Leo, you were wrong: the house was held  
As if a storm were listening with delight  
And hushed its thunder.

LEO

Will you ask the house  
To teach you singing? Quit your *Orpheus* then,  
And sing in farces grown to operas,  
Where all the prurience of the full-fed mob  
Is tickled with melodic impudence:  
Jerk forth burlesque bravuras, square your arms  
Akimbo with a tavern wench's grace,  
And set the splendid compass of your voice  
To lyric jigs. Go to! I thought you meant  
To be an artist — lift your audience  
To see your vision, not trick forth a show  
To please the grossest taste of grossest numbers.

ARMGART (*taking up LEO's hand and kissing it*)

Pardon, good Leo, I am penitent.  
I will do penance: sing a hundred trills  
Into a deep-dug grave, then burying them  
As one did Midas' secret, rid myself  
Of naughty exultation. Oh I trilled  
At nature's prompting, like the nightingales.  
Go scold them, dearest Leo.

LEO

I stop my ears.  
Nature in Gluck inspiring Orpheus,  
Has done with nightingales. Are bird-beaks lips?

GRAF

Truce to rebukes! Tell us—who were not there —  
The double drama: how the expectant house  
Took the first notes.

WALPURGA (*turning from her occupation of deck-  
ing the room with the flowers*)

Yes, tell us all, dear Armgart.  
Did you feel tremors? Leo, how did she look?  
Was there a cheer to greet her?

LEO

Not a sound.  
She walked like Orpheus in his solitude,  
And seemed to see naught but what no man saw.  
'T was famous. Not the Schroeder-Devrient  
Had done it better. But your blessed public  
Had never any judgment in cold blood —  
Thinks all perhaps were better otherwise,  
Till rapture brings a reason.



ARMGART (*scornfully*)

I knew that!  
 The women whispered, "Not a pretty face!"  
 The men, "Well, well, a goodly length of limb;  
 She bears the chiton." — It were all the same  
 Were I the Virgin Mother and my stage  
 The opening heavens at the Judgment-day:  
 Gossips would peep, jog elbows, rate the price  
 Of such a woman in the social mart.  
 What were the drama of the world to them,  
 Unless they felt the hell-prong?

LEO

Peace, now, peace;  
 I hate my phrases to be smothered o'er  
 With sauce of paraphrase, my sober tune  
 Made bass to rambling trebles, showering down  
 In endless demi-semi-quavers.

ARMGART (*taking a bon-bon from the table, uplifting it before putting it into her mouth, and turning away*)

Mum!

GRAF

Yes, tell us all the glory, leave the blame.

WALPURGA

You first, dear Leo — what you saw and heard;  
 Then Armgart — she must tell us what she felt.

LEO

Well! The first notes came clearly, firmly forth.  
 And I was easy, for behind those rills

I knew there was a fountain. I could see  
 The house was breathing gently, heads were still;  
 Parrot opinion was struck meekly mute,  
 And human hearts were swelling. Armgart stood  
 As if she had been new-created there  
 And found her voice which found a melody.  
 The minx! Gluck had not written, nor I taught:  
 Orpheus was Armgart, Armgart Orpheus.  
 Well, well, all through the *scena* I could feel  
 The silence tremble now, now poise itself  
 With added weight of feeling, till at last  
 Delight o'er-toppled it. The final note  
 Had happy drowning in the unloosed roar  
 That surged and ebbed and ever surged again,  
 Till expectation kept it pent awhile  
 Ere Orpheus returned. Pfui! He was changed:  
 My demi-god was pale, had downcast eyes  
 That quivered like a bride's who fain would send  
 Backward the rising tear.

ARMGART (*advancing, but then turning away, as  
 if to check her speech*)

I *was* a bride,

As nuns are at their spousals.

LEO

Ay, my lady,  
 That moment will not come again: applause  
 May come and plenty; but the first, first draught!

(*Snaps his fingers.*)

Music has sounds for it — I know no words.  
 I felt it once myself when they performed  
 My overture to Sintram. Well! 't is strange,  
 We know not pain from pleasure in such joy.

ARMGART (*turning quickly*)

Oh, pleasure has cramped dwelling in our souls,  
And when full Being comes must call on pain  
To lend it liberal space.

WALPURGA

I hope the house  
Kept a reserve of plaudits: I am jealous  
Lest they had dulled themselves for coming good  
That should have seemed the better and the best.

LEO

No, 't was a revel where they had but quaffed  
Their opening cup. I thank the artist's star,  
His audience keeps not sober: once afire,  
They flame toward climax though his merit hold  
But fairly even.

ARMGART (*her hand on LEO's arm*)

Now, now, confess the truth:  
I sang still better to the very end —  
All save the trill; I give that up to you,  
To bite and growl at. Why, you said yourself,  
Each time I sang, it seemed new doors were oped  
That you might hear heaven clearer.

LEO (*shaking his finger*)

I was raving.

ARMGART

I am not glad with that mean vanity  
Which knows no good beyond its appetite  
Full feasting upon praise! I am only glad,  
Being praised for what I know is worth the praise;

Glad of the proof that I myself have part  
 In what I worship! At the last applause —  
 Seeming a roar of tropic winds that tossed  
 The handkerchiefs and many-coloured flowers,  
 Falling like shattered rainbows all around —  
 Think you I felt myself a *prima donna*?  
 No, but a happy spiritual star  
 Such as old Dante saw, wrought in a rose  
 Of light in Paradise, whose only self  
 Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused,  
 Music, life, power — I moving in the midst  
 With a sublime necessity of good.

LEO (*with a shrug*)

I thought it was a *prima donna* came  
 Within the side-scenes; ay, and she was proud  
 To find the bouquet from the royal box  
 Enclosed a jewel-case, and proud to wear  
 A star of brilliants, quite an earthly star,  
 Valued by thalers. Come, my lady, own  
 Ambition has five senses, and a self  
 That gives it good warm lodging when it sinks  
 Plump down from ecstasy.

ARMGART

Own it? why not?  
 Am I a sage whose words must fall like seed  
 Silently buried toward a far-off spring?  
 I sing to living men and my effect  
 Is like the summer's sun, that ripens corn  
 Or now or never. If the world brings me gifts,  
 Gold, incense, myrrh — 't will be the needful sign  
 That I have stirred it as the high year stirs  
 Before I sink to winter.

GRAF

Ecstasies

Are short — most happily! We should but lose  
 Were Armgart borne too commonly and long  
 Out of the self that charms us. Could I choose,  
 She were less apt to soar beyond the reach  
 Of woman's foibles, innocent vanities,  
 Fondness for trifles like that pretty star  
 Twinkling beside her cloud of ebon hair.

ARMGART (*taking out the gem and looking at it*)

This little star! I would it were the seed  
 Of a whole Milky Way, if such bright shimmer  
 Were the sole speech men told their rapture with  
 At Armgart's music. Shall I turn aside  
 From splendours which flash out the glow I make,  
 And live to make, in all the chosen breasts  
 Of half a Continent? No, may it come,  
 That splendour! May the day be near when men  
 Think much to let my horses draw me home,  
 And new lands welcome me upon their beach,  
 Loving me for my fame. That is the truth  
 Of what I wish, nay, yearn for. Shall I lie?  
 Pretend to seek obscurity — to sing  
 In hope of disregard? A vile pretence!  
 And blasphemy besides. For what is fame  
 But the benignant strength of One, transformed  
 To joy of Many? Tributes, plaudits come  
 As necessary breathing of such joy;  
 And may they come to me!

GRAF

The auguries

Point clearly that way. Is it no offence  
 To wish the eagle's wing may find repose,



As feebler wings do, in a quiet nest?  
Or has the taste of fame already turned  
The Woman to a Muse . . .

LEO (*going to the table*)

Who needs no supper.  
I am her priest, ready to eat her share  
Of good Walpurga's offerings.

WALPURGA

Armgart, come.

Graf, will you come?

GRAF

Thanks, I play truant here,  
And must retrieve my self-indulged delay.  
But will the Muse receive a votary  
At any hour to-morrow?

ARMGART

Any hour  
After rehearsal, after twelve at noon.

SCENE II

*The same Salon, morning. ARMGART seated, in her bonnet and walking-dress. The GRAF standing near her against the piano.*

GRAF

Armgart, to many minds the first success  
Is reason for desisting. I have known  
A man so versatile, he tried all arts,  
But when in each by turns he had achieved  
Just so much mastery as made men say,

"He could be king here if he would," he threw  
 The lauded skill aside. He hates, said one,  
 The level of achieved pre-eminence,  
 He must be conquering still; but others said —

ARMGART

The truth, I hope: he had a meagre soul,  
 Holding no depth where love could root itself.  
 "Could if he would?" True greatness ever  
 wills —  
 It lives in wholeness if it live at all,  
 And all its strength is knit with constancy.

GRAF

He used to say himself he was too sane  
 To give his life away for excellence  
 Which yet must stand, an ivory statuette  
 Wrought to perfection through long lonely years,  
 Huddled in the mart of mediocrities.  
 He said, the very finest doing wins  
 The admiring only; but to leave undone,  
 Promise and not fulfil, like buried youth,  
 Wins all the envious, makes them sigh your name  
 As that fair Absent, blameless Possible,  
 Which could alone impassion them; and thus,  
 Serene negation has free gift of all,  
 Panting achievement struggles, is denied,  
 Or wins to lose again. What say you, Armgart?  
 Truth has rough flavours if we bite it through;  
 I think this sarcasm came from out its core  
 Of bitter irony.

ARMGART

It is the truth  
 Mean souls select to feed upon. What then?  
 Their meanness is a truth, which I will spurn.

The praise I seek lives not in envious breath  
 Using my name to blight another's deed.  
 I sing for love of song and that renown  
 Which is the spreading act, the world-wide share,  
 Of good that I was born with. Had I failed —  
 Well, that had been a truth most pitiable.  
 I cannot bear to think what life would be  
 With high hope shrunk to endurance, stunted  
     aims  
 Like broken lances ground to eating-knives,  
 A self sunk down to look with level eyes  
 At low achievement, doomed from day to day  
 To distaste of its consciousness. But I —

GRAF

Have won, not lost, in your decisive throw.  
 And I too glory in this issue; yet,  
 The public verdict has no potency  
 To sway my judgment of what Armgart is:  
 My pure delight in her would be but sullied,  
 If it o'erflowed with mixture of men's praise.  
 And had she failed, I should have said, "The Pearl  
 Remains a pearl for me, reflects the light  
 With the same fitness that first charmed my  
     gaze —  
 Is worth as fine a setting now as then."

ARMGART (*rising*)

Oh, you are good! But why will you rehearse  
 The talk of cynics, who with insect eyes  
 Explore the secrets of the rubbish-heap?  
 I hate your epigrams and pointed saws  
 Whose narrow truth is but broad falsity.  
 Confess your friend was shallow.

GRAF

I confess

Life is not rounded in an epigram,  
 And saying aught, we leave a world unsaid.  
 I quoted, merely to shape forth my thought  
 That high success has terrors when achieved —  
 Like preternatural spouses whose dire love  
 Hangs perilous on slight observances:  
 Whence it were possible that Armgart crowned  
 Might turn and listen to a pleading voice,  
 Though Armgart striving in the race was deaf.  
 You said you dared not think what life had been  
 Without the stamp of eminence; have you thought  
 How you will bear the poise of eminence  
 With dread of sliding? Paint the future out  
 As an unchecked and glorious career,  
 'T will grow more strenuous by the very love  
 You bear to excellence, the very fate  
 Of human powers, which tread at every step  
 On possible verges.

ARMGART

I accept the peril.

I choose to walk high with sublimer dread  
 Rather than crawl in safety. And, besides,  
 I am an artist as you are a noble:  
 I ought to bear the burden of my rank.

GRAF

Such parallels, dear Armgart, are but snares  
 To catch the mind with seeming argument —  
 Small baits of likeness 'mid disparity.  
 Men rise the higher as their task is high,  
 The task being well achieved. A woman's rank  
 Lies in the fulness of her womanhood:  
 Therein alone she is royal.

## ARMGART

Yes, I know  
 The oft-taught Gospel: "Woman, thy desire  
 Shall be that all superlatives on earth  
 Belong to men, save the one highest kind —  
 To be a mother. Thou shalt not desire  
 To do aught best save pure subservience:  
 Nature has willed it so!" O blessed Nature  
 Let her be arbitress; she gave me voice  
 Such as she only gives a woman child,  
 Best of its kind, gave me ambition too,  
 That sense transcendent which can taste the joy  
 Of swaying multitudes, of being adored  
 For such achievement, needed excellence,  
 As man's best art must wait for, or be dumb.  
 Men did not say, when I had sung last night,  
 "'T was good, nay, wonderful, considering  
 She is a woman" — and then turn to add,  
 "Tenor or baritone had sung her songs  
 Better, of course: she's but a woman spoiled."  
 I beg your pardon, Graf, you said it.

## GRAF

No!

How should I say it, Armgart? I who own  
 The magic of your nature-given art  
 As sweetest effluence of your womanhood  
 Which, being to my choice the best, must find  
 The best of utterance. But this I say:  
 Your fervid youth beguiles you; you mistake  
 A strain of lyric passion for a life  
 Which in the spending is a chronicle  
 With ugly pages. Trust me, Armgart, trust me;  
 Ambition exquisite as yours which soars  
 Towards something quintessential you call fame,



Is not robust enough for this gross world  
 Whose fame is dense with false and foolish breath.  
 Ardour, a-twin with nice refining thought,  
 Prepares a double pain. Pain had been saved,  
 Nay, purer glory reached, had you been throned  
 As woman only, holding all your art  
 As attribute to that dear sovereignty —  
 Concentring your power in home delights  
 Which penetrate and purify the world.

ARMGART

What! leave the opera with my part ill-sung  
 While I was warbling in a drawing-room?  
 Sing in the chimney-corner to inspire  
 My husband reading news? Let the world hear  
 My music only in his morning speech  
 Less stammering than most honourable men's?  
 No! tell me that my song is poor, my art  
 The piteous feat of weakness aping strength —  
 That were fit proem to your argument.  
 Till then, I am an artist by my birth —  
 By the same warrant that I am a woman;  
 Nay, in the added rarer gift I see  
 Supreme vocation: if a conflict comes,  
 Perish — no, not the woman, but the joys  
 Which men make narrow by their narrowness.  
 Oh, I am happy! The great masters write  
 For women's voices, and great Music wants me!  
 I need not crush myself within a mould  
 Of theory called Nature: I have room  
 To breathe and grow unstunted.

GRAF

Armgart, hear me.  
 I meant not that our talk should hurry on

To such collision. Foresight of the ills  
 Thick shadowing your path, drew on my speech  
 Beyond intention. True, I came to ask  
 A great renunciation, but not this  
 Toward which my words at first perversely strayed,  
 As if in memory of their earlier suit,  
 Forgetful . . . . .  
 Armgart, do you remember too? the suit  
 Had but postponement, was not quite disdained —  
 Was told to wait and learn — what it has  
 learned —  
 A more submissive speech.

ARMGART (*with some agitation*)

Then it forgot

Its lesson cruelly. As I remember,  
 'T was not to speak save to the artist crowned,  
 Nor speak to her of casting off her crown.

GRAF

Nor will it, Armgart. I come not to seek  
 Any renunciation save the wife's,  
 Which turns away from other possible love  
 Future and worthier, to take his love  
 Who asks the name of husband. He who sought  
 Armgart obscure, and heard her answer,  
 "Wait" —  
 May come without suspicion now to seek  
 Armgart applauded.

ARMGART (*turning toward him*)

Yes, without suspicion

Of aught save what consists with faithfulness  
 In all expressed intent. Forgive me, Graf —

I am ungrateful to no soul that loves me—  
 To you most grateful. Yet the best intent  
 Grasps but a living present which may grow  
 Like any unfledged bird. You are a noble,  
 And have a high career; just now you said  
 'T was higher far than aught a woman seeks  
 Beyond mere womanhood. You claim to be  
 More than a husband, but could not rejoice  
 That I were more than wife. What follows, then?  
 You choosing me with such persistency  
 As is but stretched-out rashness, soon must find  
 Our marriage asks concessions, asks resolve  
 To share renunciation or demand it.  
 Either we both renounce a mutual ease,  
 As in a nation's need both man and wife  
 Do public services, or one of us  
 Must yield that something else for which each  
     lives  
 Besides the other. Men are reasoners:  
 That premise of superior claims perforce  
 Urges conclusion — "Armgart, it is you."

## GRAF

But if I say I have considered this  
 With strict prevision, counted all the cost  
 Which that great good of loving you demands —  
 Questioned by stores of patience, half resolved  
 To live resigned without a bliss whose threat  
 Touched you as well as me — and finally,  
 With impetus of undivided will  
 Returned to say, "You shall be free as now;  
 Only accept the refuge, shelter, guard,  
 My love will give your freedom" — then your  
     words  
 Are hard accusal.

ARMGART

Well, I accuse myself.  
My love would be accomplice of your will.

GRAF

Again — my will?

ARMGART

Oh, your unspoken will.  
Your silent tolerance would torture me,  
And on that rack I should deny the good  
I yet believed in.

GRAF

Then I am the man  
Whom you would love?

ARMGART

Whom I refuse to love!  
No; I will live alone and pour my pain  
With passion into music, where it turns  
To what is best within my better self.  
I will not take for husband one who deems  
The thing my soul acknowledges as good —  
The thing I hold worth striving, suffering for,  
To be a thing dispensed with easily  
Or else the idol of a mind infirm.

GRAF

Armgart, you are ungenerous; you strain  
My thought beyond its mark. Our difference  
Lies not so deep as love — as union  
Through a mysterious fitness that transcends  
Formal agreement.

## ARMGART

It lies deep enough  
 To chafe the union. If many a man  
 Refrains, degraded, from the utmost right,  
 Because the pleadings of his wife's small fears  
 Are little serpents biting at his heel —  
 How shall a woman keep her steadfastness  
 Beneath a frost within her husband's eyes  
 Where coldness scorches? Graf, it is your sorrow  
 That you love Armgart. Nay, it is her sorrow  
 That she may not love you.

## GRAF

Woman, it seems,  
 Has enviable power to love or not  
 According to her will.

## ARMGART

She has the will —  
 I have — who am one woman — not to take  
 Disloyal pledges that divide her will.  
 The man who marries me must wed my Art —  
 Honour and cherish it, not tolerate.

## GRAF

The man is yet to come whose theory  
 Will weigh as naught with you against his love.

## ARMGART

Whose theory will plead beside his love.

## GRAF

Himself a singer, then? who knows no life  
 Out of the opera books, where tenor parts  
 Are found to suit him?



ARMGART

You are bitter, Graf.  
Forgive me; seek the woman you deserve,  
All grace, all goodness, who has not yet found  
A meaning in her life, nor any end  
Beyond fulfilling yours. The type abounds.

GRAF

And happily, for the world.

ARMGART

Yes, happily.  
Let it excuse me that my kind is rare:  
Commonness is its own security.

GRAF

Armgar, I would with all my soul I knew  
The man so rare that he could make your life  
As woman sweet to you, as artist safe.

ARMGART

Oh, I can live unmated, but not live  
Without the bliss of singing to the world,  
And feeling all my world respond to me.

GRAF

May it be lasting. Then, we two must part?

ARMGART

I thank you from my heart for all. Farewell!

## SCENE III

A YEAR LATER

*The same salon. WALPURGA is standing looking toward the window with an air of uneasiness.*  
DOCTOR GRAHN.

DOCTOR

Where is my patient, Fräulein?

WALPURGA

Fled! escaped!  
Gone to rehearsal. Is it dangerous?

DOCTOR

No, no; her throat is cured. I only came  
To hear her try her voice. Had she yet sung?

WALPURGA

No; she had meant to wait for you. She said,  
"The Doctor has a right to my first song."  
Her gratitude was full of little plans,  
But all were swept away like gathered flowers  
By sudden storm. She saw this opera bill —  
It was a wasp to sting her: she turned pale,  
Snatched up her hat and muffler, said in haste,  
"I go to Leo — to rehearsal — none  
Shall sing *Fidelio* to-night but me!"  
Then rushed down-stairs.

DOCTOR (*looking at his watch*)

And this, not long ago?

WALPURGA

Barely an hour.

DOCTOR

I will come again,  
Returning from Charlottenburg at one.

WALPURGA

Doctor, I feel a strange presentiment.  
Are you quite easy?

DOCTOR

She can take no harm.  
'T was time for her to sing: her throat is well,  
It was a fierce attack, and dangerous;  
I had to use strong remedies, but — well!  
At one, dear Fräulein, we shall meet again.

## SCENE IV

TWO HOURS LATER

WALPURGA *starts up, looking toward the door.*  
ARMGART *enters, followed by LEO.* *She throws herself on a chair which stands with its back toward the door, speechless, not seeming to see anything.* WALPURGA *casts a questioning terrified look at LEO.* *He shrugs his shoulders, and lifts up his hands behind ARMGART, who sits like a helpless image, while WALPURGA takes off her hat and mantle.*

WALPURGA

Armgart, dear Armgart (*kneeling and taking her hands*), only speak to me,

Your poor Walpurga. Oh, your hands are cold.  
Clasp mine, and warm them! I will kiss them  
warm.

(*ARMGART looks at her an instant, then draws away her hands, and, turning aside, buries her face against the back of the chair, WALPURGA rising and standing near. DOCTOR GRAHN enters.*)

DOCTOR

News! stirring news to-day! wonders come thick.

*ARMGART (starting up at the first sound of his voice, and speaking vehemently)*

Yes, thick, thick, thick! and you have murdered it!  
Murdered my voice — poisoned the soul in me,  
And kept me living.

You never told me that your cruel cures  
Were clogging films — a mouldy, dead'ning  
blight —

A lava-mud to crust and bury me,  
Yet hold me living in a deep, deep tomb,  
Crying unheard forever! Oh, your cures  
Are devil's triumphs, you can rob, maim, slay,  
And keep a hell on the other side your cure  
Where you can see your victim quivering  
Between the teeth of torture — see a soul  
Made keen by loss — all anguish with a good  
Once known and gone!

*(Turns and sinks back on her chair.)*

O misery, misery!

You might have killed me, might have let me sleep  
After my happy day and wake — not here!  
In some new unremembered world — not here,  
Where all is faded, flat — a feast broke off —

Banners all meaningless — exulting words  
Dull, dull — a drum that lingers in the air  
Beating to melody which no man hears.

DOCTOR (*after a moment's silence*)

A sudden check has shaken you, poor child!  
All things seem livid, tottering to your sense,  
From inward tumult. Stricken by a threat  
You see your terrors only. Tell me, Leo:  
'T is not such utter loss.

(LEO, *with a shrug, goes quietly out.*)

The freshest bloom  
Merely, has left the fruit; the fruit itself . . . .

ARMGART

Is ruined, withered, is a thing to hide  
Away from scorn or pity. Oh, you stand  
And look compassionate now, but when Death  
came

With mercy in his hands, you hindered him.  
I did not choose to live and have your pity.  
You never told me, never gave me choice  
To die a singer, lightning-struck, unmaimed,  
Or live what you would make me with your  
cures —

A self accursed with consciousness of change,  
A mind that lives in naught but members lopped,  
A power turned to pain — as meaningless  
As letters fallen asunder that once made  
A hymn of rapture. Oh, I had meaning once  
Like day and sweetest air. What am I now?  
The millionth woman in superfluous herds.  
Why should I be, do, think. 'T is thistle-seed,  
That grows and grows to feed the rubbish-heap.  
Leave me alone!



DOCTOR

Well, I will come again;  
Send for me when you will, though but to rate me.  
That is medicinal — a letting blood.

ARMGART

Oh, there is one physician, only one,  
Who cures and never spoils. Him I shall send  
for;  
He comes readily.

DOCTOR *to* WALPURGA

One word, dear Fräulein.

SCENE V

ARMGART, WALPURGA

ARMGART

Walpurga, have you walked this morning?

WALPURGA

No.

ARMGART

Go, then, and walk; I wish to be alone.

WALPURGA

I will not leave you.

ARMGART

Will not at my wish?

WALPURGA

Will not, because you wish it. Say no more,  
But take this draught.

ARMGART

The Doctor gave it you?

It is an anodyne. Put it away.

He cured me of my voice, and now he wants  
To cure me of my vision and resolve —  
Drug me to sleep that I may wake again  
Without a purpose, abject as the rest  
To bear the yoke of life. He shall not cheat me  
Of that fresh strength which anguish gives the soul,  
The inspiration of revolt, ere rage  
Slackens to faltering. Now I see the truth.

WALPURGA (*setting down the glass*)

Then you must see a future in your reach,  
With happiness enough to make a dower  
For two of modest claims.

ARMGART

Oh, you intone

That chant of consolation wherewith ease  
Makes itself easier in the sight of pain.

WALPURGA

No; I would not console you, but rebuke.

ARMGART

That is more bearable. Forgive me, dear.  
Say what you will. But now I want to write.

(*She rises and moves toward a table.*)

## WALPURGA

I say then, you are simply fevered, mad;  
 You cry aloud at horrors that would vanish  
 If you would change the light, throw into shade  
 The loss you aggrandize, and let day fall  
 On good remaining, nay, on good refused  
 Which may be gain now. Did you not reject  
 A woman's lot more brilliant, as some held,  
 Than any singer's? It may still be yours.  
 Graf Dornberg loved you well.

## ARMGART

Not me, not me.

He loved one well who was like me in all  
 Save in a voice which made that All unlike  
 As diamond is to charcoal. Oh, a man's love!  
 Think you he loves a woman's inner self  
 Aching with loss of loveliness? — as mothers  
 Cleave to the palpitating pain that dwells  
 Within their misformed offspring?

## WALPURGA

But the Graf

Chose you as simple Armgart — had preferred  
 That you should never seek for any fame  
 But such as matrons have who rear great sons.  
 And therefore you rejected him; but now —

## ARMGART

Ay, now — now he would see me as I am,  
 (*She takes up a hand-mirror.*)  
 Russet and songless as a missel-thrush.  
 An ordinary girl — a plain brown girl,  
 Who, if some meaning flash from out her words,

Shocks as a disproportioned thing — a Will  
 That, like an arm astretch and broken off,  
 Has naught to hurl — the torso of a soul.  
 I sang him into love of me: my song  
 Was consecration, lifted me apart  
 From the crowd chiselled like me, sister forms,  
 But empty of divineness. Nay, my charm  
 Was half that I could win fame yet renounce,  
 A wife with glory possible absorbed  
 Into her husband's actual.

WALPURGA

For shame!

Armgart, you slander him. What would you say  
 If now he came to you and asked again  
 That you would be his wife?

ARMGART

No, and thrice no!

It would be pitying constancy, not love,  
 That brought him to me now. I will not be  
 A pensioner in marriage. Sacraments  
 Are not to feed the paupers of the world.  
 If he were generous — I am generous too.

ARMGART

Proud, Armgart, but not generous.

ARMGART

Say no more.

He will not know until —

WALPURGA

He knows already.

360 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

ARMGART (*quickly*)

Is he come back?

WALPURGA

Yes, and will soon be here.  
The Doctor had twice seen him and would go  
From hence again to see him.

ARMGART

Well, he knows.

It is all one.

WALPURGA

What if he were outside?  
I hear a footstep in the ante-room.

ARMGART (*raising herself and assuming calmness*)

Why let him come, of course. I shall behave  
Like what I am, a common personage  
Who looks for nothing but civility.  
I shall not play the fallen heroine,  
Assume a tragic part and throw out cues  
For a beseeching lover.

WALPURGA

Some one raps.  
(*Goes to the door.*)

A letter — from the Graf.

ARMGART

Then open it.

(*WALPURGA still offers it.*)

Nay, my head swims. Read it. I cannot see.

(*WALPURGA opens it, reads and pauses.*)

Read it. Have done! No matter what it is.



WALPURGA (*reads in a low, hesitating voice*)

“I am deeply moved — my heart is rent, to hear of your illness and its cruel result, just now communicated to me by Dr. Grahn. But surely it is possible that this result may not be permanent. For youth such as yours, Time may hold in store something more than resignation: who shall say that it does not hold renewal? I have not dared to ask admission to you in the hours of a recent shock, but I cannot depart on a long mission without tendering my sympathy and my farewell. I start this evening for the Caucasus, and thence I proceed to India, where I am intrusted by the Government with business which may be of long duration.”

(WALPURGA *sits down dejectedly.*)

ARMGART (*after a slight shudder, bitterly*).

The Graf has much discretion. I am glad.  
He spares us both a pain, not seeing me.  
What I like least is that consoling hope —  
That empty cup, so neatly ciphered “Time,”  
Handed me as a cordial for despair.

(*Slowly and dreamily*) Time — what a word to  
fling as charity!

Bland neutral words for slow, dull-beating pain —  
Days, months, and years! — If I would wait for  
them.

(*She takes up her hat and puts it on, then  
wraps her mantle round her. WALPURGA  
leaves the room.*)

Why, this is but beginning. (WALPURGA *re-  
enters.*) Kiss me, dear.

I am going now — alone — out — for a walk.  
Say you will never wound me any more

With such cajolery as nurses use  
 To patients amorous of a crippled life.  
 Flatter the blind: I see.

## WALPURGA

Well, I was wrong.  
 In haste to soothe, I snatched at flickers merely.  
 Believe me, I will flatter you no more.

## ARMGART

Bear witness, I am calm. I read my lot  
 As soberly as if it were a tale  
 Writ by a creeping feuilletonist and called  
 "The Woman's Lot: a Tale of Everyday:"  
 A middling woman's, to impress the world  
 With high superfluousness; her thoughts a crop  
 Of chickweed errors or of pot-herb facts,  
 Smiled at like some child's drawing on a slate.  
 "Genteel?" "Oh yes, gives lessons; not so good  
 As any man's would be, but cheaper far."  
 "Pretty?" "No; yet she makes a figure fit  
 For good society. Poor thing, she sews  
 Both late and early, turns and alters all  
 To suit the changing mode. Some widower  
 Might do well, marrying her; but in these  
 days! . . .  
 Well, she can somewhat eke her narrow gains  
 By writing, just to furnish her with gloves  
 And droschkies in the rain. They print her things  
 Often for charity." — Oh, a dog's life!  
 A harnessed dog's, that draws a little cart  
 Voted a nuisance! I am going now.

## WALPURGA

Not now, the door is locked.

ARMGART

Give me the key!

WALPURGA

Locked on the outside. Gretchen has the key:  
She is gone on errands.

ARMGART

What, you dare to keep me  
Your prisoner?

WALPURGA

And have I not been yours?  
Your wish has been a bolt to keep me in.  
Perhaps that middling woman whom you paint  
With far-off scorn . . .

ARMGART

I paint what I must be!  
What is my soul to me without the voice  
That gave it freedom? — gave it one grand touch  
And made it nobly human? — Prisoned now,  
Prisoned in all the petty mimicries  
Called woman's knowledge, that will fit the world  
As doll-clothes fit a man. I can do naught  
Better than what a million women do —  
Must drudge among the crowd and feel my life  
Beating upon the world without response,  
Beating with passion through an insect's horn  
That moves a millet-seed laboriously.  
If I *would* do it!

WALPURGA (*coldly*)

And why should you not?

ARMGART (*turning quickly*)

Because Heaven made me royal — wrought me  
out

With subtle finish toward pre-eminence,  
Made every channel of my soul converge  
To one high function, and then flung me down,  
That breaking I might turn to subtlest pain.  
An inborn passion gives a rebel's right:  
I would rebel and die in twenty worlds  
Sooner than bear the yoke of thwarted life,  
Each keenest sense turned into keen distaste,  
Hunger not satisfied but kept alive  
Breathing in languor half a century.  
All the world now is but a rack of threads  
To twist and dwarf me into pettiness  
And basely feigned content, the placid mask  
Of women's misery.

WALPURGA (*indignantly*)

Ay, such a mask

As the few born like you to easy joy,  
Cradled in privilege, take for natural  
On all the lowly faces that must look  
Upward to you! What revelation now  
Shows you the mask or gives presentiment  
Of sadness hidden? You who every day  
These five years saw me limp to wait on you,  
And thought the order perfect which gave *me*,  
The girl without pretension to be aught,  
A splendid cousin for my happiness:  
To watch the night through when her brain was  
fired

With too much gladness — listen, always listen  
To what *she* felt, who having power had right  
To feel exorbitantly, and submerge

The souls around her with the poured-out flood  
 Of what must be ere she was satisfied!  
 That was feigned patience, was it? Why not love,  
 Love nurtured even with that strength of self  
 Which found no room save in another's life?  
 Oh, such as I know joy by negatives,  
 And all their deepest passion is a pang  
 Till they accept their pauper's heritage,  
 And meekly live from out the general store  
 Of joy they were born stripped of. I accept—  
 Nay, now would sooner choose it than the wealth  
 Of natures you call royal, who can live  
 In mere mock knowledge of their fellows' woe,  
 Thinking their smiles may heal it.

ARMGART (*tremulously*)

Nay, Walpurga,

I did not make a palace of my joy  
 To shut the world's truth from me. All my good  
 Was that I touched the world and made a part  
 In the world's dower of beauty, strength, and  
 bliss:

It was the glimpse of consciousness divine  
 Which pours out day and sees the day is good.  
 Now I am fallen dark; I sit in gloom,  
 Remembering bitterly. Yet you speak truth;  
 I wearied you, it seems; took all your help  
 As cushioned nobles use a weary serf,  
 Not looking at his face.

WALPURGA

Oh, I but stand

As a small symbol for the mighty sum  
 Of claims unpaid to needy myriads;  
 I think you never set your loss beside



That mighty deficit. Is your work gone —  
 The prouder queenly work that paid itself  
 And yet was overpaid with men's applause?  
 Are you no longer chartered, privileged,  
 But sunk to simple woman's penury,  
 To ruthless Nature's chary average —  
 Where is the rebel's right for you alone?  
 Noble rebellion lifts a common load;  
 But what is he who flings his own load off  
 And leaves his fellows toiling? Rebel's right?  
 Say rather, the deserter's. Oh, you smiled  
 From your clear height on all the million lots  
 Which yet you brand as abject.

## ARMGART

I was blind

With too much happiness: true vision comes  
 Only, it seems, with sorrow. Were there one  
 This moment near me, suffering what I feel,  
 And needing me for comfort in her pang —  
 Then it were worth the while to live; 'not else.

## WALPURGA

One — near you — why, they throng! you hardly  
 stir  
 But your act touches them. We touch afar.  
 For did not swarthy slaves of yesterday  
 Leap in their bondage at the Hebrews' flight,  
 Which touched them through the thrice millennial  
 dark?  
 But you can find the sufferer you need  
 With touch less subtle.

## ARMGART

Who has need of me?

## WALPURGA

Love finds the need it fills. But you are hard.

## ARMGART

Is it not you, Walpurga, who are hard?  
You humoured all my wishes till to-day,  
When fate has blighted me.

## WALPURGA

You would not hear  
The "chant of consolation:" words of hope  
Only embittered you. Then hear the truth —  
A lame girl's truth, whom no one ever praised  
For being cheerful. "It is well," they said:  
"Were she cross-grained she could not be en-  
dured."

A word of truth from her had startled you;  
But you — you claimed the universe; naught less  
Than all existence working in sure tracks  
Toward your supremacy. The wheels might  
scathe

A myriad destinies — nay, must perforce;  
But yours they must keep clear of; just for you  
The seething atoms through the firmament  
Must bear a human heart — which you had not!  
For what is it to you that women, men,  
Plod, faint, are weary, and espouse despair  
Of aught but fellowship? Save that you spurn  
To be among them? Now, then, you are lame —  
Maimed, as you said, and levelled with the crowd:  
Call it new birth — birth from that monstrous  
Self

Which, smiling down upon a race oppressed,  
Says, "All is good, for I am throned at ease."  
Dear Armgart — nay, you tremble — I am cruel.

ARMGART

Oh no! hark! Some one knocks. Come in!—  
come in!

(*Enter LEO.*)

LEO

See, Gretchen let me in. I could not rest  
Longer away from you.

ARMGART

Sit down, dear Leo.  
Walpurga, I would speak with him alone.

(*WALPURGA goes out.*)

LEO (*hesitatingly*)

You mean to walk?

ARMGART

No, I shall stay within.  
(*She takes off her hat and mantle, and sits  
down immediately. After a pause, speak-  
ing in a subdued tone to LEO.*)

How old are you?

LEO

Threescore and five.

ARMGART

That's old.  
I never thought till now how you have lived.  
They hardly ever play your music?

LEO (*raising his eyebrows and throwing out his  
lip*)

No!  
Schubert too wrote for silence: half his work

Lay like a frozen Rhine till summers came  
That warmed the grass above him. Even so!  
His music lives now with a mighty youth.

ARMGART

Do you think yours will live when you are dead?

LEO

Pfui! The time was, I drank that home-brewed  
wine  
And found it heady, while my blood was young:  
Now it scarce warms me. Tipple it as I may,  
I am sober still, and say: "My old friend Leo,  
Much grain is wasted in the world and rots;  
Why not thy handful?"

ARMGART

Strange! since I have known you  
Till now I never wondered how you lived.  
When I sang well — that was your jubilee.  
But you were old already.

LEO

Yes, child, yes:  
Youth thinks itself the goal of each old life;  
Age has but travelled from a far-off time  
Just to be ready for youth's service. Well!  
It was my chief delight to perfect you.

ARMGART

Good Leo! You have lived on little joys.  
But your delight in me is crushed forever.  
Your pains, where are they now? They shaped  
intent  
Which action frustrates; shaped an inward sense  
Which is but keen despair, the agony  
Of highest vision in the lowest pit.

## LEO

Nay, nay, I have a thought: keep to the stage,  
 To drama without song; for you can act —  
 Who knows how well, when all the soul is poured  
 Into that sluice alone.

## ARMGART

I know, and you:  
 The second or third best in tragedies  
 That cease to touch the fibre of the time.  
 No; song is gone, but nature's other gift,  
 Self-judgment, is not gone. Song was my speech,  
 And with its impulse only, action came:  
 Song was the battle's onset, when cool purpose  
 Glows into rage, becomes a warring god  
 And moves the limbs with miracle. But now —  
 Oh, I should stand hemmed in with thoughts and  
 rules —  
 Say, "This way passion acts," yet never feel  
 The might of passion. How should I declaim?  
 As monsters write with feet instead of hands.  
 I will not feed on doing great tasks ill,  
 Dull the world's sense with mediocrity,  
 And live by trash that smothers excellence.  
 One gift I had that ranked me with the best —  
 The secret of my frame — and that is gone.  
 For all life now I am a broken thing.  
 But silence there! Good Leo, advise me now.  
 I would take humble work and do it well —  
 Teach music, singing — what I can — not here,  
 But in some smaller town where I may bring  
 The method you have taught me, pass your gift  
 To others who can use it for delight.  
 You think I can do that?

*(She pauses with a sob in her voice.)*



LEO

Yes, yes, dear child!

And it were well, perhaps, to change the place —  
Begin afresh as I did when I left  
Vienna with a heart half broken.

ARMGART (*roused by surprise*)

You?

LEO

Well, it is long ago. But I had lost —  
No matter! We must bury our dead joys  
And live above them with a living world.  
But whither, think you, you would like to go?

ARMGART

To Freiburg.

LEO

In the Breisgau? And why there?

It is too small.

ARMGART

Walpurga was born there,  
And loves the place. She quitted it for me  
These five years past. Now I will take her there.  
Dear Leo, I will bury my dead joy.

LEO

Mothers do so, bereaved; then learn to love  
Another's living child.

ARMGART

Oh, it is hard  
To take the little corpse, and lay it low.  
And say, "None misses it but me."

372 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

She sings . . .  
I mean Paulina sings Fidelio,  
And they will welcome her to-night.

LEO

Well, well,  
'T is better that our griefs should not spread far.

1870

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## HOW LISA LOVED THE KING

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SIX hundred years ago, in Dante's time,  
Before his cheek was furrowed by deep  
rhyme —

When Europe, fed afresh from Eastern story,  
Was like a garden tangled with the glory  
Of flowers hand-planted and of flowers air-sown,  
Climbing and trailing, budding and full-blown,  
Where purple bells are tossed amid pink stars,  
And springing blades, green troops in innocent  
wars,

Crowd every shady spot of teeming earth,  
Making invisible motion visible birth —  
Six hundred years ago, Palermo town  
Kept holiday. A deed of great renown,  
A high revenge, had freed it from the yoke  
Of hated Frenchmen, and from Calpe's rock  
To where Bosphorus caught the earlier sun,  
'T was told that Pedro, King of Aragon,  
Was welcomed master of all Sicily,  
A royal knight, supreme as kings should be  
In strength and gentleness that make high chivalry.

Spain was the favourite home of knightly grace,  
Where generous men rode steeds of generous  
race;

Both Spanish, yet half Arab, both inspired  
By mutual spirit, that each motion fired  
With beauteous response, like minstrelsy  
Afresh fulfilling fresh expectancy.  
So when Palermo made high festival,  
The joy of matrons and of maidens all

Was the mock terror of the tournament,  
 Where safety, with the glimpse of danger blent,  
 Took exaltation as from epic song,  
 Which greatly tells the pains that to great life  
     belong.

And in all eyes King Pedro was the king  
 Of cavaliers: as in a full-gemmed ring  
 The largest ruby, or as that bright star  
 Whose shining shows us where the Hyads are.  
 His the best jennet, and he sat it best;  
 His weapon, whether tilting or in rest,  
 Was worthiest watching, and his face once seen  
 Gave to the promise of his royal mien  
 Such rich fulfilment as the opened eyes  
 Of a loved sleeper, or the long-watched rise  
 Of vernal day, whose joy o'er stream and meadow  
     flies.

But of the maiden forms that thick enwreathed  
 The broad piazza and sweet witchery breathed,  
 With innocent faces budding all arow  
 From balconies and windows high and low,  
 Who was it felt the deep mysterious glow,  
 The impregnation with supernal fire  
 Of young ideal love — transformed desire,  
 Whose passion is but worship of that Best  
 Taught by the many-mingled creed of each young  
     breast?

'T was gentle Lisa, of no noble line,  
 Child of Bernardo, a rich Florentine,  
 Who from his merchant-city hither came  
 To trade in drugs; yet kept an honest fame,  
 And had the virtue not to try and sell  
 Drugs that had none. He loved his riches well,  
 But loved them chiefly for his Lisa's sake,  
 Whom with a father's care he sought to make

The bride of some true honourable man:  
 Of Perdicone (so the rumour ran),  
 Whose birth was higher than his fortunes were;  
 For still your trader likes a mixture fair  
 Of blood that hurries to some higher strain  
 Than reckoning money's loss and money's gain.  
 And of such mixture good may surely come:  
 Lords' scions so may learn to cast a sum,  
 A trader's grandson bear a well-set head,  
 And have less conscious manners, better bred;  
 Nor, when he tries to be polite, be rude instead.

'T was Perdicone's friends made overtures  
 To good Bernardo: so one dame assures  
 Her neighbour dame who notices the youth  
 Fixing his eyes on Lisa; and in truth  
 Eyes that could see her on this summer day  
 Might find it hard to turn another way.  
 She had a pensive beauty, yet not sad;  
 Rather, like minor cadences that glad  
 The hearts of little birds amid spring boughs;  
 And oft the trumpet or the joust would rouse  
 Pulses that gave her cheek a finer glow,  
 Parting her lips that seemed a mimic bow  
 By chiselling Love for play in coral wrought,  
 Then quickened by him with the passionate  
 thought,  
 The soul that trembled in the lustrous night  
 Of slow long eyes. Her body was so slight,  
 It seemed she could have floated in the sky,  
 And with the angelic choir made symphony;  
 But in her cheek's rich tinge, and in the dark  
 Of darkest hair and eyes, she bore a mark  
 Of kinship to her generous mother earth,  
 The fervid land that gives the plummy palm-trees  
 birth.



She saw not Perdicone; her young mind  
 Dreamed not that any man had ever pined  
 For such a little simple maid as she:  
 She had but dreamed how heavenly it would be  
 To love some hero noble, beauteous, great,  
 Who would live stories worthy to narrate,  
 Like Roland, or the warriors of Troy,  
 The Cid, or Amadis, or that fair boy  
 Who conquered everything beneath the sun,  
 And somehow, some time, died at Babylon  
 Fighting the Moors. For heroes all were good  
 And fair as that archangel who withstood  
 The Evil One, the author of all wrong —  
 That Evil One who made the French so strong;  
 And now the flower of heroes must be he  
 Who drove those tyrants from dear Sicily,  
 So that her maids might walk to vespers tranquilly.

Young Lisa saw this hero in the king,  
 And as wood lilies that sweet odours bring  
 Might dream the light that opes their modest eyne  
 Was lily-odoured — and as rites divine,  
 Round turf-laid altars, or 'neath roofs of stone,  
 Draw sanctity from out the heart alone  
 That loves and worships, so the miniature  
 Perplexed of her soul's world, all virgin pure,  
 Filled with heroic virtues that bright form,  
 Raona's royalty, the finished norm  
 Of horsemanship — the half of chivalry:  
 For how could generous men avengers be,  
 Save as God's messengers on coursers fleet? —  
 These, scouring earth, made Spain with Syria meet  
 In one self world where the same right had sway,  
 And good must grow as grew the blessed day.  
 No more, great Love his essence had endued  
 With Pedro's form, and entering subdued

## HOW LISA LOVED THE KING 377

The soul of Lisa, fervid and intense,  
Proud in its choice of proud obedience  
To hardship glorified by perfect reverence.

Sweet Lisa homeward carried that dire guest,  
And in her chamber through the hours of rest  
The darkness was alight for her with sheen  
Of arms, and pluméd helm, and right between  
Their commoner gloss, like the pure living spring  
'Twixt porphyry lips, or living bird's bright  
wing

'Twixt golden wires, the glances of the king  
Flashed on her soul, and waked vibrations there  
Of known delights love-mixed to new and rare:  
The impalpable dream was turned to breathing  
flesh,

Chill thought of summer to the warm close mesh  
Of sunbeams held between the citron-leaves,  
Clothing her life of life. Oh, she believes  
That she could be content if he but knew  
(Her poor small self could claim no other due)  
How Lisa's lowly love had highest reach  
Of wingéd passion, whereto wingéd speech  
Would be scorched remnants left by mountain  
flame.

Though, had she such lame message, were it  
blame

To tell what greatness dwelt in her, what rank  
She held in loving? Modest maidens shrank  
From telling love that fed on selfish hope;  
But love, as hopeless as the shattering song  
Wailed for loved beings who have joined the  
throng

Of mighty dead ones. . . . Nay, but she was  
weak —

Knew only prayers and ballads — could not speak

With eloquence save what dumb creatures have,  
That with small cries and touches small boons  
crave.

She watched all day that she might see him pass  
With knights and ladies; but she said, "Alas!  
Though he should see me, it were all as one  
He saw a pigeon sitting on the stone  
Of wall or balcony: some coloured spot  
His eye just sees, his mind regardeth not.  
I have no music-touch that could bring nigh  
My love to his soul's hearing. I shall die,  
And he will never know who Lisa was, —  
The trader's child, whose soaring spirit rose  
As hedge-born aloe-flowers that rarest years dis-  
close.

"For were I now a fair deep-breasted queen  
A-horseback, with blond hair, and tunic green  
Gold-bordered, like Costanza, I should need  
No change within to make me queenly there;  
For they the royal-hearted women are  
Who nobly love the noblest, yet have grace  
For needy suffering lives in lowliest place,  
Carrying a choicer sunlight in their smile,  
The heavenliest ray that pitieth the vile.  
My love is such, it cannot choose but soar  
Up to the highest; yet forevermore,  
Though I were happy, throned beside the king,  
I should be tender to each little thing  
With hurt warm breast, that had no speech to  
tell

Its inward pang, and I would soothe it well  
With tender touch and with a low soft moan  
For company: my dumb love-pang is lone,  
Prisoned as topaz-beam within a rough-garbed  
stone."

So, inward-wailing, Lisa passed her days.  
 Each night the August moon with changing phase  
 Looked broader, harder on her unchanged pain;  
 Each noon the heat lay heavier again  
 On her despair; until her body frail  
 Shrank like the snow that watchers in the vale  
 See narrowed on the height each summer morn;  
 While her dark glance burnt larger, more forlorn,  
 As if the soul within her all on fire  
 Made of her being one swift funeral pyre.  
 Father and mother saw with sad dismay  
 The meaning of their riches melt away:  
 For without Lisa what would sequins buy?  
 What wish were left if Lisa were to die?  
 Through her they cared for summers still to come,  
 Else they would be as ghosts without a home  
 In any flesh that could feel glad desire.  
 They pay the best physicians, never tire  
 Of seeking what will soothe her, promising  
 That aught she longed for, though it were a thing  
 Hard to be come at as the Indian snow,  
 Or roses that on Alpine summits blow —  
 It should be hers. She answers with low voice,  
 She longs for death alone — death is her choice;  
 Death is the King who never did think scorn,  
 But rescues every meanest soul to sorrow born.

Yet one day, as they bent above her bed  
 And watched her in brief sleep, her drooping head  
 Turned gently, as the thirsty flowers that feel  
 Some moist revival through their petals steal,  
 And little flutterings of her lids and lips  
 Told of such dreamy joy as sometimes dips  
 A skyey shadow in the mind's poor pool,  
 She oped her eyes, and turned their dark gems  
 full



Upon her father, as in utterance dumb  
 Of some new prayer that in her sleep had come.  
 "What is it, Lisa?" "Father, I would see  
 Minuccio, the great singer; bring him me."  
 For always, night and day, her unstilled thought,  
 Wandering all o'er its little world, had sought  
 How she could reach, by some soft pleading  
 touch,

King Pedro's soul, that she who loved so much  
 Dying, might have a place within his mind —  
 A little grave which he would sometimes find  
 And plant some flower on it — some thought,  
 some memory kind,

Till in her dream she saw Minuccio  
 Touching his viola, and chanting low  
 A strain that, falling on her brokenly,  
 Seemed blossoms lightly blown from off a tree,  
 Each burdened with a word that was a scent —  
 Raona, Lisa, love, death, tournament;  
 Then in her dreams she said, "He sings of me —  
 Might be my messenger; ah, now I see  
 The king is listening —" Then she awoke,  
 And, missing her dear dream, that new-born  
 longing spoke.

She longed for music: that was natural;  
 Physicians said it was medicinal;  
 The humours might be schooled by true consent  
 Of a fine tenor and fine instrument;  
 In brief, good music, mixed with doctor's stuff,  
 Apollo with Asklepios — enough!  
 Minuccio, entreated, gladly came.  
 (He was a singer of most gentle fame —  
 A noble, kindly spirit, not elate  
 That he was famous, but the song was great —  
 Would sing as finely to this suffering child



As at the court where princes on him smiled.)  
 Gently he entered and sat down by her,  
 Asking what sort of strain she would prefer —  
 The voice alone, or voice with viol wed;  
 Then, when she chose the last, he preluded  
 With magic hand, that summoned from the strings  
 Aerial spirits, rare yet vibrant wings  
 That fanned the pulses of his listener,  
 And waked each sleeping sense with blissful stir.  
 Her cheek already showed a slow faint blush,  
 But soon the voice, in pure full liquid rush,  
 Made all the passion, that till now she felt,  
 Seem but cool waters that in warmer melt.  
 Finished the song, she prayed to be alone  
 With kind Minuccio; for her faith had grown  
 To trust him as if missioned like a priest  
 With some high grace, that when his singing  
     ceased  
 Still made him wiser, more magnanimous  
 Than common men who had no genius.

So laying her small hand within his palm,  
 She told him how that secret glorious harm  
 Of loftiest loving had befallen her;  
 That death, her only hope, most bitter were,  
 If when she died her love must perish too,  
 As songs unsung and thoughts unspoken do,  
 Which else might live within another breast.  
 She said, "Minuccio, the grave were rest,  
 If I were sure, that lying cold and lone,  
 My love, my best of life, had safely flown  
 And nestled in the bosom of the king;  
 See, 'tis a small weak bird, with unfledged  
     wing.  
 But you will carry it for me secretly,  
 And bear it to the king, then come to me

And tell me it is safe, and I shall go  
Content, knowing that he I love my love doth  
know."

Then she wept silently, but each large tear  
Made pleading music to the inward ear  
Of good Minuccio. "Lisa, trust in me,"  
He said, and kissed her fingers loyally;  
"It is sweet law to me to do your will,  
And ere the sun his round shall thrice fulfil,  
I hope to bring you news of such rare skill  
As amulets have, that aches in trusting bosoms  
still."

He needed not to pause and first devise  
How he should tell the king; for in nowise  
Were such love-message worthily bested  
Save in fine verse by music renderéd.  
He sought a poet-friend, a Siennese,  
And "Mico, mine," he said, "full oft to please  
Thy whim of sadness I have sung thee strains  
To make thee weep in verse: now pay my  
pains,

And write me a canzón divinely sad,  
Sinlessly passionate and meekly mad  
With young despair, speaking a maiden's heart  
Of fifteen summers, who would fain depart  
From ripening life's new-urgent mystery —  
Love-choice of one too high her love to be —  
But cannot yield her breath till she has poured  
Her strength away in this hot-bleeding word  
Telling the secret of her soul to her soul's lord."

Said Mico, "Nay, that thought is poesy,  
I need but listen as it sings to me.  
Come thou again to-morrow." The third day,  
When linkéd notes had perfected the lay,

Minuccio had his summons to the court  
 To make, as he was wont, the moments short  
 Of ceremonious dinner to the king.  
 This was the time when he had meant to bring  
 Melodious message of young Lisa's love:  
 He waited till the air had ceased to move  
 To ringing silver, till Falernian wine  
 Made quickened sense with quietude combine,  
 And then with passionate descant made each ear  
 incline.

*Love, thou didst see me, light as morning's breath,  
 Roaming a garden in a joyous error,  
 Laughing at chases vain, a happy child,  
 Till of thy countenance the alluring terror  
 In majesty from out the blossoms smiled,  
 From out their life seeming a beauteous Death.*

*O Love, who so didst choose me for thine own,  
 Taking this little isle to thy great sway,  
 See now, it is the honour of thy throne  
 That what thou gavest perish not away,  
 Nor leave some sweet remembrance to atone  
 By life that will be for the brief life gone:  
 Hear, ere the shroud o'er these frail limbs be  
 thrown*

*Since every king is vassal unto thee,  
 My heart's lord needs must listen loyally —  
 Oh tell him I am waiting for my Death!*

*Tell him, for that he hath such royal power  
 'T were hard for him to think how small a  
 thing,  
 How slight a sign, would make a wealthy dower  
 For one like me, the bride of that pale king  
 Whose bed is mine at some swift-nearing hour.*

*Go to my lord, and to his memory bring  
That happy birthday of my sorrowing  
When his large glance made meaner gazers glad,  
Entering the bannered lists: 't was then I had  
The wound that laid me in the arms of Death.*

*Tell him, O Love, I am a lowly maid,  
No more than any little knot of thyme  
That he with careless foot may often tread;  
Yet lowest fragrance oft will mount sublime  
And cleave to things most high and hallowéd,  
As doth the fragrance of my life's springtime,  
My lowly love, that soaring seeks to climb  
Within his thought, and make a gentle bliss,  
More blissful than if mine, in being his:  
So shall I live in him and rest in Death.*

The strain was new. It seemed a pleading  
cry,  
And yet a rounded perfect melody,  
Making grief beauteous as the tear-filled eyes  
Of little child at little miseries.  
Trembling at first, then swelling as it rose,  
Like rising light that broad and broader grows,  
It filled the hall, and so possessed the air  
That not one breathing soul was present there,  
Though dullest, slowest, but was quivering  
In music's grasp, and forced to hear her sing.  
But most such sweet compulsion took the mood  
Of Pedro (tired of doing what he would).  
Whether the words which that strange meaning  
bore  
Were but the poet's feigning or aught more,  
Was bounden question, since their aim must be  
At some imagined or true royalty.  
He called Minuccio and bade him tell



What poet of the day had writ so well;  
 For though they came behind all former rhymes,  
 The verses were not bad for these poor times.  
 "Monsignor, they are only three days old,"  
 Minuccio said; "but it must not be told  
 How this song grew, save to your royal ear."  
 Eager, the king withdrew where none was near,  
 And gave close audience to Minuccio,  
 Who meetly told that love-tale meet to know.  
 The king had features pliant to confess  
 The presence of a manly tenderness —  
 Son, father, brother, lover, blent in one,  
 In fine harmonic exaltation —  
 The spirit of religious chivalry.  
 He listened, and Minuccio could see  
 The tender, generous admiration spread  
 O'er all his face, and glorify his head  
 With royalty that would have kept its rank  
 Though his brocaded robes to tatters shrank.  
 He answered without pause, "So sweet a maid,  
 In nature's own insignia arrayed,  
 Though she were come of unmixed trading blood  
 That sold and bartered ever since the Flood,  
 Would have the self-contained and single worth  
 Of radiant jewels born in darksome earth.  
 Raona were a shame to Sicily,  
 Letting such love and tears unhonoured be:  
 Hasten, Minuccio, tell her that the king  
 To-day will surely visit her when vespers ring."

Joyful, Minuccio bore the joyous word,  
 And told at full, while none but Lisa heard,  
 How each thing had befallen, sang the song,  
 And like a patient nurse who would prolong  
 All means of soothing, dwelt upon each tone,  
 Each look, with which the mighty Aragon



Marked the high worth his royal heart assigned  
 To that dear place he held in Lisa's mind.  
 She listened till the draughts of pure content  
 Through all her limbs like some new being  
 went —

Life, not recovered, but untried before,  
 From out the growing world's unmeasured store  
 Of fuller, better, more divinely mixed.  
 'T was glad reverse: she had so firmly fixed  
 To die, already seemed to fall a veil  
 Shrouding the inner glow from light of senses  
 pale.

Her parents wondering see her half arise —  
 Wondering, rejoicing, see her long dark eyes  
 Brimful with clearness, not of 'scaping tears,  
 But of some light ethereal that enspheres  
 Their orbs with calm, some vision newly learnt  
 Where strangest fires erewhile had blindly burnt.  
 She asked to have her soft white robe and band  
 And coral ornaments, and with her hand  
 She gave her locks' dark length a backward fall,  
 Then looked intently in a mirror small,  
 And feared her face might perhaps displease the  
 king;

“ In truth,” she said, “ I am a tiny thing;  
 I was too bold to tell what could such visit bring.”  
 Meanwhile the king, revolving in his thought  
 That virgin passion, was more deeply wrought  
 To chivalrous pity; and at vesper bell,  
 With careless mien which hid his purpose well,  
 Went forth on horseback, and as if by chance  
 Passing Bernardo's house, he paused to glance  
 At the fine garden of this wealthy man,  
 This Tuscan trader turned Palermitan:  
 But, presently dismounting, chose to walk  
 Amid the trellises, in gracious talk

With the same trader, deigning even to ask  
 If he had yet fulfilled the father's task  
 Of marrying that daughter whose young charms  
 Himself, betwixt the passages of arms,  
 Noted admiringly. "Monsignor, no,  
 She is not married; that were little woe,  
 Since she has counted barely fifteen years;  
 But all such hopes of late have turned to fears;  
 She droops and fades; though for a space quite  
 brief —

Scarce three hours past — she finds some strange  
 relief."

The king avised: "'T were dole to all of us,  
 The world should lose a maid so beauteous;  
 Let me now see her; since I am her liege lord,  
 Her spirits must wage war with death at my strong  
 word."

In such half-serious playfulness, he wends,  
 With Lisa's father and two chosen friends,  
 Up to the chamber where she pillowed sits  
 Watching the open door, that now admits  
 A presence as much better than her dreams,  
 As happiness than any longing seems.  
 The king advanced, and, with a reverent kiss  
 Upon her hand, said, "Lady, what is this?  
 You, whose sweet youth should others' solace be,  
 Pierce all our hearts, languishing piteously.  
 We pray you, for the love of us, be cheered,  
 Nor be too reckless of that life, endeared  
 To us who know your passing worthiness,  
 And count your blooming life as part of our life's  
 bliss."

Those words, that touch upon her hand from  
 him

Whom her soul worshipped, as far seraphim

Worship the distant glory, brought some shame  
 Quivering upon her cheek, yet thrilled her frame  
 With such deep joy she seemed in paradise,  
 In wondering gladness, and in dumb surprise  
 That bliss could be so blissful: then she spoke —  
 “ Signor, I was too weak to bear the yoke,  
 The golden yoke of thoughts too great for me;  
 That was the ground of my infirmity.  
 But now, I pray your grace to have belief  
 That I shall soon be well, nor any more cause  
 grief.”

The king alone perceived the covert sense  
 Of all her words, which made one evidence  
 With her pure voice and candid loveliness,  
 That he had lost much honour, honouring less  
 That message of her passionate distress.  
 He stayed beside her for a little while  
 With gentle looks and speech, until a smile  
 As placid as a ray of early morn  
 On opening flower-cups o'er her lips was borne.  
 When he had left her, and the tidings spread  
 Through all the town how he had visited  
 The Tuscan trader's daughter, who was sick,  
 Men said, it was a royal deed and catholic.

And Lisa? she no longer wished for death;  
 But as a poet, who sweet verses saith  
 Within his soul, and joys in music there,  
 Nor seeks another heaven, nor can bear  
 Disturbing pleasures, so was she content,  
 Breathing the life of grateful sentiment.  
 She thought no maid betrothed could be more  
 blest;

For treasure must be valued by the test  
 Of highest excellence and rarity,

And her dear joy was best as best could be;  
 There seemed no other crown to her delight  
 Now the high loved one saw her love aright.  
 Thus her soul thriving on that exquisite mood,  
 Spread like the May-time all its beauteous good  
 O'er the soft bloom of neck, and arms, and cheek,  
 And strengthened the sweet body, once so weak,  
 Until she rose and walked, and, like a bird  
 With sweetly rippling throat, she made her spring  
       joys heard.

The king, when he the happy change had seen,  
 Trusted the ear of Constance, his fair queen,  
 With Lisa's innocent secret, and conferred  
 How they should jointly, by their deed and word,  
 Honour this maiden's love, which, like the prayer  
 Of loyal hermits, never thought to share  
 In what it gave. The queen had that chief grace  
 Of womanhood, a heart that can embrace  
 All goodness in another woman's form;  
 And that same day, ere the sun lay too warm  
 On southern terraces, a messenger  
 Informed Bernardo that the royal pair  
 Would straightway visit him and celebrate  
 Their gladness at his daughter's happier state,  
 Which they were fain to see. Soon came the  
       king

On horseback, with his barons, heralding  
 The advent of the queen in courtly state;  
 And all, descending at the garden gate,  
 Streamed with their feathers, velvet, and brocade,  
 Through the pleached alleys, till they, pausing,  
       made

A lake of splendour 'mid the aloes gray —  
 When, meekly facing all their proud array,  
 The white-robed Lisa with her parents stood,  
 As some white dove before the gorgeous brood



Of dapple-breasted birds born by the Colchian  
flood.

The king and queen, by gracious looks and speech,  
Encourage her, and thus their courtiers teach  
How this fair morning they may courtliest be  
By making Lisa pass it happily.  
And soon the ladies and the barons all  
Draw her by turns, as at a festival  
Made for her sake, to easy, gay discourse,  
And compliment with looks and smiles enforce;  
A joyous hum is heard the gardens round;  
Soon there is Spanish dancing and the sound  
Of minstrel's song, and autumn fruits are pluckt;  
Till mindfully the king and queen conduct  
Lisa apart to where a trellised shade  
Made pleasant resting. Then King Pedro said —  
“Excellent maiden, that rich gift of love  
Your heart hath made us, hath a worth above  
All royal treasures, nor is fitly met  
Save when the grateful memory of deep debt  
Lies still behind the outward honours done:  
And as a sign that no oblivion  
Shall overflow that faithful memory,  
We while we live your cavalier will be,  
Nor will we ever arm ourselves for fight,  
Whether for struggle dire or brief delight  
Of warlike feigning, but we first will take  
The colours you ordain, and for your sake  
Charge the more bravely where your emblem is;  
Nor will we ever claim an added bliss  
To our sweet thoughts of you save one sole kiss.  
But there still rests the outward honour meet  
To mark your worthiness, and we entreat  
That you will turn your ear to proffered vows  
Of one who loves you, and would be your spouse.



We must not wrong yourself and Sicily  
 By letting all your blooming years pass by  
 Unmated: you will give the world its due  
 From beauteous maiden and become a matron  
 true."

Then Lisa, wrapt in virgin wonderment  
 At her ambitious love's complete content,  
 Which left no further good for her to seek  
 Than love's obedience, said with accent meek —  
 "Monsignor, I know well that were it known  
 To all the world how high my love had flown,  
 There would be few who would not deem me mad,  
 Or say my mind the falsest image had  
 Of my condition and your lofty place.  
 But heaven has seen that for no moment's space  
 Have I forgotten you to be the king,  
 Or me myself to be a lowly thing —  
 A little lark, enamoured of the sky,  
 That soared to sing, to break its breast, and  
 die.

But, as you better know than I, the heart  
 In choosing chooseth not its own desert,  
 But that great merit which attracteth it;  
 'T is law, I struggled, but I must submit,  
 And having seen a worth all worth above,  
 I loved you, love you, and shall always love;  
 But that doth mean, my will is ever yours,  
 Not only when your will my good insures,  
 But if it wrought me what the world calls harm —  
 Fire, wounds, would wear from your dear will a  
 charm.

That you will be my knight is full content,  
 And for that kiss — I pray, first for the queen's  
 consent."

Her answer, given with such firm gentleness,  
 Pleas'd the queen well, and made her hold no less  
 Of Lisa's merit than the king had held.  
 And so, all cloudy threats of grief dispell'd,  
 There was betrothal made that very morn'  
 'Twixt Perdicone, youthful, brave, well-born,  
 And Lisa, whom he loved; she loving well  
 The lot that from obedience befell.  
 The queen a rare betrothal ring on each  
 Bestow'd, and other gems, with gracious speech.  
 And that no joy might lack, the king, who knew  
 The youth was poor, gave him rich Ceffalú  
 And Cataletta, large and fruitful lands —  
 Adding much promise when he join'd their hands.  
 At last he said to Lisa, with an air  
 Gallant yet noble: "Now we claim our share  
 From your sweet love, a share which is not small:  
 For in the sacrament one crumb is all."  
 Then taking her small face his hands between,  
 He kiss'd her on the brow with kiss serene,  
 Fit seal to that pure vision her young soul had seen.

Sicilians witness'd that King Pedro kept  
 His royal promise: Perdicone stept  
 To many honours honourably won,  
 Living with Lisa in true union.  
 Throughout his life the king still took delight  
 To call himself fair Lisa's faithful knight;  
 And never wore in field or tournament  
 A scarf or emblem save by Lisa sent.  
 Such deeds made subjects loyal in that land:  
 They joy'd that one so worthy to command,  
 So chivalrous and gentle, had become  
 The king of Sicily, and fill'd the room  
 Of Frenchmen, who abus'd the Church's trust,  
 Till, in a righteous vengeance on their lust,

HOW LISA LOVED THE KING 398

Messina rose, with God, and with the dagger's  
thrust.

L'ENVOI

*Reader, this story pleased me long ago  
In the bright pages of Boccaccio,  
And where the author of a good we know,  
Let us not fail to pay the grateful thanks we owe.*

1869

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## A MINOR PROPHET

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**I** HAVE a friend, a vegetarian seer,  
By name Elias Baptist Butterworth,  
A harmless, bland, disinterested man,  
Whose ancestors in Cromwell's day believed  
The Second Advent certain in five years,  
But when King Charles the Second came instead,  
Revised their date and sought another world:  
I mean — not heaven but — America.  
A fervid stock, whose generous hope embraced  
The fortunes of mankind, not stopping short  
At rise of leather, or the fall of gold,  
Nor listening to the voices of the time  
As housewives listen to a cackling hen,  
With wonder whether she has laid her egg  
On their own nest-egg. Still they did insist  
Somewhat too wearisomely on the joys  
Of their Millennium, when coats and hats  
Would all be of one pattern, books and songs  
All fit for Sundays, and the casual talk  
As good as sermons preached extempore.

And in Elias the ancestral zeal  
Breathes strong as ever, only modified  
By Transatlantic air and modern thought.  
You could not pass him in the street and fail  
To note his shoulders' long declivity,  
Beard to the waist, swan-neck, and large pale eyes;  
Or, when he lifts his hat, to mark his hair  
Brushed back to show his great capacity —  
A full grain's length at the angle of the brow  
Proving him witty, while the shallower men

Only seem witty in their repartees.  
Not that he's vain, but that his doctrine needs  
The testimony of his frontal lobe.

On all points he adopts the latest views;  
Takes for the key of universal Mind  
The "levitation" of stout gentlemen;  
Believes the Rappings are not spirits' work,  
But the Thought-atmosphere's, a stream of brains  
In correlated force of raps, as proved  
By motion, heat, and science generally;  
The spectrum, for example, which has shown  
The selfsame metals in the sun as here;  
So the Thought-atmosphere is everywhere:  
High truths that glimmered under other names  
To ancient sages, whence good scholarship  
Applied to Eleusinian mysteries —  
The Vedas — Tripitaka — Vendidad —  
Might furnish weaker proof for weaker minds  
That Thought was rapping in the hoary past,  
And might have edified the Greeks by raps  
At the greater Dionysia, if their ears  
Had not been filled with Sophoclean verse.  
And when all Earth is vegetarian —  
When, lacking butchers, quadrupeds die out,  
And less Thought-atmosphere is reabsorbed  
By nerves of insects parasitical,  
Those higher truths, seized now by higher minds  
But not expressed (the insects hindering),  
Will either flash out into eloquence,  
Or better still, be comprehensible  
By rappings simply, without need of roots.  
'T is on this theme — the vegetarian world —  
That good Elias willingly expands:  
He loves to tell in mildly nasal tones  
And vowels stretched to suit the widest views,



The future fortunes of our infant Earth —  
 When it will be too full of human kind  
 To have the room for wilder animals.  
 Saith he, Sahara will be populous  
 With families of gentlemen retired  
 From commerce in more Central Africa,  
 Who order coolness as we order coal,  
 And have a lobe anterior strong enough  
 To think away the sand-storms. Science thus  
 Will leave no spot on this terraqueous globe  
 Unfit to be inhabited by man,  
 The chief of animals: all meaner brutes  
 Will have been smoked and elbowed out of life.  
 No lions then shall lap Caffrarian pools,  
 Or shake the Atlas with their midnight roar:  
 Even the slow, slime-loving crocodile,  
 The last of animals to take a hint,  
 Will then retire forever from a scene  
 Where public feeling strongly sets against him.  
 Fishes may lead carnivorous lives obscure,  
 But must not dream of culinary rank  
 Or being dished in good society.  
 Imagination in that distant age,  
 Aiming at fiction called historical,  
 Will vainly try to reconstruct the times  
 When it was men's preposterous delight  
 To sit astride live horses, which consumed  
 Materials for incalculable cakes;  
 When there were milkmaids who drew milk from  
     cows  
 With udders kept abnormal for that end  
 Since the rude mythopœic period  
 Of Aryan dairymen, who did not blush  
 To call their milkmaid and their daughter one —  
 Helplessly gazing at the Milky Way,  
 Nor dreaming of the astral cocoa-nuts

Quite at the service of posterity.

'T is to be feared, though, that the duller boys,

Much given to anachronisms and nuts

(Elias has confessed boys will be boys),

May write a jockey for a centaur, think

Europa's suitor was an Irish bull,

Æsop a journalist who wrote up Fox,

And Bruin a chief swindler upon 'Change.

Boys will be boys, but dogs will all be moral,

With longer alimentary canals

Suited to diet vegetarian.

The uglier breeds will fade from memory,

Or, being palæontological,

Live but as portraits in large learned books,

Distasteful to the feelings of an age

Nourished on purest beauty. Earth will hold

No stupid brutes, no cheerful queernesses,

No naïve cunning, grave absurdity.

Wart-pigs with tender and parental grunts,

Wombats much flattened as to their contour,

Perhaps from too much crushing in the ark,

But taking meekly that fatality;

The serious cranes, unstung by ridicule;

Long-headed, short-legged, solemn-looking curs,

(Wise, silent critics of a flippant age);

The silly straddling foals, the weak-brained geese

Hissing fallaciously at sound of wheels —

All these rude products will have disappeared

Along with every faulty human type.

By dint of diet vegetarian

All will be harmony of hue and line,

Bodies and minds all perfect, limbs well-turned,

And talk quite free from aught erroneous.

Thus far Elias in his seer's mantle:

But at this climax in his prophecy

My sinking spirits, fearing to be swamped,  
Urge me to speak. "High prospects these, my  
friend,

Setting the weak carnivorous brain astretch;  
We will resume the thread another day."

"To-morrow," cries Elias, "at this hour?"

"No, not to-morrow — I shall have a cold —  
At least I feel some soreness — this endemic —  
Good-bye."

No tears are sadder than the smile  
With which I quit Elias. Bitterly  
I feel that every change upon this earth  
Is bought with sacrifice. My yearnings fail  
To reach that high apocalyptic mount  
Which shows in bird's-eye view a perfect world,  
Or enter warmly into other joys  
Than those of faulty, struggling human kind.  
That strain upon my soul's too feeble wing  
Ends in ignoble floundering: I fall  
Into short-sighted pity for the men  
Who living in those perfect future times  
Will not know half the dear imperfect things  
That move my smiles and tears — will never know  
The fine old incongruities that raise  
My friendly laugh; the innocent conceits  
That like a needless eyeglass or black patch  
Give those who wear them harmless happiness;  
The twists and cracks in our poor earthenware  
That touch me to more conscious fellowship  
(I am not myself the finest Parian)  
With my coevals. So poor Colin Clout,  
To whom raw onion gives prospective zest,  
Consoling hours of dampest wintry work,  
Could hardly fancy any regal joys  
Quite unimpregnate with the onion's scent:

Perhaps his highest hopes are not all clear  
Of waftings from that energetic bulb;  
'T is well that onion is not heresy.  
Speaking in parable, I am Colin Clout.  
A clinging flavour penetrates my life —  
My onion is imperfectness. I cleave  
To nature's blunders, evanescent types  
Which sages banish from Utopia.  
"Not worship beauty?" say you. Patience, friend!  
I worship in the temple with the rest;  
But by my hearth I keep a sacred nook  
For gnomes and dwarfs, duck-footed waddling  
elves  
Who stitched and hammered for the weary man  
In days of old. And in that piety  
I clothe ungainly forms inherited  
From toiling generations, daily bent  
At desk, or plough, or loom, or in the mine,  
In pioneering labours for the world.  
Nay, I am apt when floundering confused  
From too rash flight, to grasp at paradox,  
And pity future men who will not know  
A keen experience with pity blent,  
The pathos exquisite of lovely minds  
Hid in harsh forms — not penetrating them  
Like fire divine within a common bush  
Which glows transfigured by the heavenly guest,  
So that men put their shoes off; but encaged  
Like a sweet child within some thick-walled cell,  
Who leaps and fails to hold the window-bars.  
But having shown a little dimpled hand  
Is visited thenceforth by tender hearts  
Whose eyes keep watch about the prison walls.  
A foolish, nay, a wicked paradox!  
For purest pity is the eye of love  
Melting at sight of sorrow; and to grieve



Because it sees no sorrow, shows a love  
 Warped from its truer nature, turned to love  
 Of merest habit, like the miser's greed.  
 But I am Colin still: my prejudice  
 Is for the flavour of my daily food.  
 Not that I doubt the world is growing still  
 As once it grew from Chaos and from Night;  
 Or have a soul too shrunken for the hope  
 Which dawned in human breasts, a double morn,  
 With earliest watchings of the rising light  
 Chasing the darkness; and through many an age  
 Has raised the vision of a future time  
 That stands an Angel with a face all mild  
 Spearing the demon. I too rest in faith  
 That man's perfection is the crowning flower,  
 Toward which the urgent sap in life's great tree  
 Is pressing — seen in puny blossoms now,  
 But in the world's great morrows to expand  
 With broadest petal and with deepest glow.

Yet, see the patched and plodding citizen  
 Waiting upon the pavement with the throng  
 While some victorious world-hero makes  
 Triumphant entry, and the peal of shouts  
 And flash of faces 'neath uplifted hats  
 Run like a storm of joy along the streets!  
 He says, "God bless him!" almost with a sob,  
 As the great hero passes; he is glad  
 The world holds mighty men and mighty deeds,  
 The music stirs his pulses like strong wine,  
 The moving splendour touches him with awe —  
 'T is glory shed around the common weal,  
 And he will pay his tribute willingly,  
 Though with the pennies earned by sordid toil.  
 Perhaps the hero's deeds have helped to bring  
 A time when every honest citizen



Shall wear a coat unpatched. And yet he feels  
More easy fellowship with neighbours there  
Who look on too; and he will soon relapse  
From noticing the banners and the steeds  
To think with pleasure there is just one bun  
Left in his pocket, that may serve to tempt  
The wide-eyed lad, whose weight is all too much  
For that young mother's arms: and then he falls  
To dreamy picturing of sunny days  
When he himself was a small big-cheeked lad  
In some far village where no heroes came,  
And stood a listener 'twixt his father's legs  
In the warm firelight, while the old folk talked  
And shook their heads and looked upon the floor;  
And he was puzzled, thinking life was fine —  
The bread and cheese so nice all through the year  
And Christmas sure to come. Oh that good time!  
He, could he choose, would have those days again  
And see the dear old-fashioned things once more.  
But soon the wheels and drums have all passed by  
And tramping feet are heard like sudden rain:  
The quiet startles our good citizen;  
He feels the child upon his arms, and knows  
He is with the people making holiday  
Because of hopes for better days to come.  
But Hope to him was like the brilliant west  
Telling of sunrise in a world unknown,  
And from that dazzling curtain of bright hues  
He turned to the familiar face of fields  
Lying all clear in the calm morning land.  
Maybe 't is wiser not to fix a lens  
Too scrutinizing on the glorious times  
When Barbarossa shall arise and shake  
His mountain, good King Arthur come again,  
And all the heroes of such giant soul  
That, living once to cheer mankind with hope,

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They had to sleep until the time was ripe  
 For greater deeds to match their greater thought.  
 Yet no! the earth yields nothing more Divine  
 Than high prophetic vision — than the Seer  
 Who fasting from man's meaner joy beholds  
 The paths of beauteous order, and constructs  
 A fairer type, to shame our low content.  
 But prophecy is like potential sound  
 Which turned to music seems a voice sublime  
 From out the soul of light; but turns to noise  
 In scrannel pipes, and makes all ears averse.

The faith that life on earth is being shaped  
 To glorious ends, that order, justice, love,  
 Mean man's completeness, mean effect as sure  
 As roundness in the dew-drop — that great faith  
 Is but the rushing and expanding stream  
 Of thought, of feeling, fed by all the past.  
 Our finest hope is finest memory,  
 As they who love in age think youth is blest  
 Because it has a life to fill with love.  
 Full souls are double mirrors, making still  
 An endless vista of fair things before  
 Repeating things behind; so faith is strong  
 Only when we are strong, shrinks when we shrink;  
 It comes when music stirs us, and the chords  
 Moving on some grand climax shake our souls  
 With influx new that makes new energies.  
 It comes in swellings of the heart and tears  
 That rise at noble and at gentle deeds —  
 At labours of the master-artist's hand  
 Which, trembling, touches to a finer end,  
 Trembling before an image seen within.  
 It comes in moments of heroic love,  
 Unjealous joy in joy not made for us —  
 In conscious triumph of the good within —

Making us worship goodness that rebukes.  
Even our failures are a prophecy,  
Even our yearnings and our bitter tears  
After that fair and true we cannot grasp;  
As patriots who seem to die in vain  
Make liberty more sacred by their pangs.

Presentiment of better things on earth  
Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls  
To admiration, self-renouncing love,  
Or thoughts, like light, that bind the world in  
one, —

Sweeps like the sense of vastness, when at night  
We hear the roll and dash of waves that break  
Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide,  
Which rises to the level of the cliff  
Because the wide Atlantic rolls behind,  
Throbbing respondent to the far-off orbs.

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## BROTHER AND SISTER

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### I

I CANNOT choose but think upon the time  
When our two lives grew like two buds that  
kiss

At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,  
Because the one so near the other is.

He was the elder and a little man  
Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,  
And I the girl that puppy-like now ran,  
Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.

I held him wise, and when he talked to me  
Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,  
I thought his knowledge marked the boundary  
Where men grew blind, though angels knew the  
rest.

If he said "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath;  
Wherever he said "Come!" I stepped in faith.

### II

Long years have left their writing on my brow,  
But yet the freshness and the dew-fed beam  
Of those young mornings are about me now,  
When we two wandered toward the far-off stream

With rod and line. Our basket held a store  
Baked for us only, and I thought with joy  
That I should have my share, though he had more,  
Because he was the elder and a boy.

The firmaments of daisies since to me  
 Have had those mornings in their opening eyes,  
 The bunchéd cowslip's pale transparency  
 Carries that sunshine of sweet memories,

And wild-rose branches take their finest scent  
 From those blest hours of infantine content.

## III

Our mother bade us keep the trodden ways,  
 Stroked down my tippet, set my brother's frill,  
 Then with the benediction of her gaze  
 Clung to us lessening, and pursued us still

Across the homestead to the rookery elms,  
 Whose tall old trunks had each a grassy mound,  
 So rich for us, we counted them as realms  
 With varied products: here were earth-nuts found,

And here the Lady-fingers in deep shade;  
 Here sloping toward the Moat the rushes grew,  
 The large to split for pith, the small to braid;  
 While over all the dark rooks cawing flew,

And made a happy strange solemnity,  
 A deep-toned chant from life unknown to me.

## IV

Our meadow-path had memorable spots:  
 One where it bridged a tiny rivulet,  
 Deep hid by tangled blue Forget-me-nots;  
 And all along the waving grasses met



My little palm, or nodded to my cheek,  
 When flowers with upturned faces gazing drew  
 My wonder downward, seeming all to speak  
 With eyes of souls that dumbly heard and knew.

Then came the copse, where wild things rushed  
 unseen,  
 And black-scathed grass betrayed the past abode  
 Of mystic gypsies, who still lurked between  
 Me and each hidden distance of the road.

A gypsy once had startled me at play,  
 Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day.

## V.

Thus rambling we were schooled in deepest lore,  
 And learned the meanings that give words a soul,  
 The fear, the love, the primal passionate store,  
 Whose shaping impulses make manhood whole.

Those hours were seed to all my after good;  
 My infant gladness, through eye, ear, and touch,  
 Took easily as warmth a various food  
 To nourish the sweet skill of loving much.

For who in age shall roam the earth and find  
 Reasons for loving that will strike out love  
 With sudden rod from the hard year-pressed  
 mind?  
 Were reasons sown as thick as stars above,

'T is love must see them, as the eyes see light:  
 Day is but Number to the darkened sight.

## VI

Our brown canal was endless to my thought;  
 And on its banks I sat in dreamy peace,  
 Unknowing how the good I loved was wrought,  
 Untroubled by the fear that it would cease.

Slowly the barges floated into view,  
 Rounding a grassy hill to me sublime  
 With some Unknown beyond it, whither flew  
 The parting cuckoo toward a fresh spring-time.

The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,  
 The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,  
 The echoes of the quarry, the still hours  
 With white robe sweeping on the shadeless noon,

Were but my growing self, are part of me,  
 My present Past, my root of piety.

## VII

Those long days measured by my little feet  
 Had chronicles which yield me many a text;  
 Where irony still finds an image meet  
 Of full-grown judgments in this world perplex.

One day my brother left me in high charge,  
 To mind the rod, while he went seeking bait,  
 And bade me, when I saw a nearing barge,  
 Snatch out the line, lest he should come too late.

Proud of the task, I watched with all my might  
 For one whole minute, till my eyes grew wide,  
 Till sky and earth took on a strange new light  
 And seemed a dream-world floating on some tide—

A fair pavilioned boat for me alone,  
 Bearing me onward through the vast unknown.

## VIII

But sudden came the barge's pitch-black prow,  
 Nearer and angrier came my brother's cry,  
 And all my soul was quivering fear, when, lo!  
 Upon the imperilled line, suspended high,

A silver perch! My guilt that won the prey,  
 Now turned to merit, had a guerdon rich  
 Of hugs and praises, and made merry play,  
 Until my triumph reached its highest pitch

When all at home were told the wondrous feat,  
 And how the little sister had fished well.  
 In secret, though my fortune tasted sweet,  
 I wondered why this happiness befell.

"The little lass had luck," the gardener said:  
 And so I learned, luck was with glory wed.

## IX

We had the selfsame world enlarged for each  
 By loving difference of girl and boy:  
 The fruit that hung on high beyond my reach  
 He plucked for me, and oft he must employ

A measuring glance to guide my tiny shoe  
 Where lay firm stepping-stones, or call to mind  
 "This thing I like my sister may not do,  
 For she is little, and I must be kind."

Thus boyish Will the nobler mastery learned  
 Where inward vision over impulse reigns,  
 Widening its life with separate life discerned,  
 A Like unlike, a Self that self restrains.

His years with others must the sweeter be  
 For those brief days he spent in loving me.

## X

His sorrow was my sorrow, and his joy  
 Sent little leaps and laughs through all my frame;  
 My doll seemed lifeless and no girlish toy  
 Had any reason when my brother came.

I knelt with him at marbles, marked his fling  
 Cut the ringed stem and make the apple drop,  
 Or watched him winding close the spiral string  
 That looped the orbits of the humming top.

Grasped by such fellowship my vagrant thought  
 Ceased with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfil;  
 My aëry-picturing fantasy was taught  
 Subjection to the harder, truer skill

That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked  
 line,  
 And by "What is," "What will be" to define.

## XI

School parted us; we never found again  
 That childish world where our two spirits mingled  
 Like scents from varying roses that remain  
 One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled.

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Yet the twin habit of that early time  
Lingered for long about the heart and tongue:  
We had been natives of one happy clime,  
And its dear accent to our utterance clung,

Till the dire years whose awful name is Change  
Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,  
And pitiless shaped them in two forms that range  
Two elements which sever their life's course.

But were another childhood-world my share,  
I would be born a little sister there.



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## STRADIVARIUS

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**Y**OUR soul was lifted by the wings to-day  
Hearing the master of the violin:  
You praised him, praised the great Sebastian too

Who made that fine Chaconne: but did you think  
Of old Antonio Stradivari? — him  
Who a good century and half ago  
Put his true work in that brown instrument  
And by the nice adjustment of its frame  
Gave it responsive life, continuous  
With the master's finger-tips and perfected  
Like them by delicate rectitude of use.  
Not Bach alone, helped by fine precedent  
Of genius gone before, nor Joachim  
Who holds the strain afresh incorporate  
By inward hearing and notation strict  
Of nerve and muscle, made our joy to-day:  
Another soul was living in the air  
And swaying it to true deliverance  
Of high invention and responsive skill:  
That plain white-aproned man who stood at work  
Patient and accurate full fourscore years,  
Cherished his sight and touch by temperance,  
And since keen sense is love of perfectness  
Made perfect violins, the needed paths  
For inspiration and high mastery.

No simpler man than he: he never cried,  
“Why was I born to this monotonous task  
Of making violins?” or flung them down  
To suit with hurling act a well-hurled curse

At labour on such perishable stuff.  
 Hence neighbours in Cremona held him dull,  
 Called him a slave, a mill-horse, a machine,  
 Begged him to tell his motives or to lend  
 A few gold pieces to a loftier mind.  
 Yet he had pithy words full fed by fact;  
 For Fact, well-trusted, reasons and persuades,  
 Is gnostic, cutting, or ironical,  
 Draws tears, or is a tocsin to arouse —  
 Can hold all figures of the orator  
 In one plain sentence; has her pauses too —  
 Eloquent silence at the chasm abrupt  
 Where knowledge ceases. Thus Antonio  
 Made answers as Fact willed, and made them  
 strong.

Naldo, a painter of eclectic school,  
 Taking his dicers, candlelight and grins  
 From Caravaggio, and in holier groups  
 Combining Flemish flesh with martyrdom —  
 Knowing all tricks of style at thirty-one,  
 And weary of them, while Antonio  
 At sixty-nine wrought placidly his best,  
 Making the violin you heard to-day —  
 Naldo would tease him oft to tell his aims.  
 “Perhaps thou hast some pleasant vice to feed —  
 The love of louis d’ors in heaps of four,  
 Each violin a heap — I’ve naught to blame;  
 My vices waste such heaps. But then, why work  
 With painful nicety? Since fame once earned  
 By luck or merit — oftenest by luck —  
 (Else why do I put Bonifazio’s name  
 To work that ‘*pinxit Naldo*’ would not sell?)  
 Is welcome index to the wealthy mob  
 Where they should pay their gold, and where they  
 pay

There they find merit — take your tow for  
flax,  
And hold the flax unlabelled with your name,  
Too coarse for sufferance.”

Antonio then:

“ I like the gold — well, yes — but not for meals.  
And as my stomach, so my eye and hand,  
And inward sense that works along with both,  
Have hunger that can never feed on coin.  
Who draws a line and satisfies his soul,  
Making it crooked where it should be straight?  
An idiot with an oyster-shell may draw  
His lines along the sand, all wavering,  
Fixing no point or pathway to a point;  
An idiot one remove may choose his line,  
Straggle and be content; but God be praised,  
Antonio Stradivari has an eye  
That winces at false work and loves the true,  
With hand and arm that play upon the tool  
As willingly as any singing bird  
Sets him to sing his morning roundelay,  
Because he likes to sing and likes the song.

Then Naldo: “ ’T is a petty kind of fame  
At best, that comes of making violins;  
And saves no masses, either. Thou wilt go  
To purgatory none the less.”

But he:

“ ’T were purgatory here to make them ill;  
And for my fame — when any master holds  
’T wixt chin and hand a violin of mine,  
He will be glad that Stradivari lived,  
Made violins, and made them of the best.  
The masters only know whose work is good;  
They will choose mine, and while God gives them  
skill

I give them instruments to play upon,  
God choosing me to help Him."

"What! were God  
At fault for violins, thou absent?"

"Yes;  
He were at fault for Stradivari's work."

"Why, many hold Giuseppe's violins  
As good as thine."

"May be: they are different.  
His quality declines: he spoils his hand  
With over-drinking. But were his the best,  
He could not work for two. My work is mine,  
And, heresy or not, if my hand slacked  
I should rob God — since He is fullest good —  
Leaving a blank instead of violins.  
I say, not God Himself can make man's best  
Without best men to help Him. I am one best  
Here in Cremona, using sunlight well  
To fashion finest maple till it serves  
More cunningly than throats, for harmony.  
'T is rare delight: I would not change my skill  
To be the Emperor with bungling hands,  
And lose my work, which comes as natural  
As self at waking."

"Thou art little more  
Than a deft potter's wheel, Antonio;  
Turning out work by mere necessity  
And lack of varied function. Higher arts  
Subsist on freedom — eccentricity —  
Uncounted inspirations — influence  
That comes with drinking, gambling, talk turned  
wild,  
Then moody misery and lack of food —  
With every dithyrambic fine excess:

These make at last a storm which flashes out  
In lightning revelations. Steady work  
Turns genius to a loom; the soul must lie  
Like grapes beneath the sun till ripeness comes  
And mellow vintage. I could paint you now  
The finest Crucifixion; yesternight  
Returning home I saw it on a sky  
Blue-black, thick-starred. I want two louis d'ors  
To buy the canvas and the costly blues —  
Trust me a fortnight."

"Where are those last two  
I lent thee for thy Judith? — her thou saw'st  
In saffron gown, with Holofernes's head  
And beauty all complete?"

"She is but sketched:  
I lack the proper model — and the mood.  
A great idea is an eagle's egg,  
Craves time for hatching; while the eagle sits,  
Feed her."

"If thou wilt call thy pictures eggs,  
I call the hatching, Work. 'T is God gives skill,  
But not without men's hands: He could not make  
Antonio Stradivari's violins  
Without Antonio. Get thee to thy easel."



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## A COLLEGE BREAKFAST-PARTY

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**Y**OUNG Hamlet, not the hesitating Dane,  
But one named after him, who lately strove  
For honours at our English Wittenberg —  
Blond, metaphysical, and sensuous,  
Questioning all things and yet half convinced  
Credulity were better; held inert  
'Twi'xt fascinations of all opposites,  
And half suspecting that the mightiest soul  
(Perhaps his own?) was union of extremes,  
Having no choice but choice of everything  
As, drinking deep to-day for love of wine,  
To-morrow half a Brahmin, scorning life  
As mere illusion, yearning for that True  
Which has no qualities; another day  
Finding the fount of grace in sacraments,  
And purest reflex of the light divine  
In gem-bossed pyx and broidered chasuble,  
Resolved to wear no stockings and to fast  
With arms extended, waiting ecstasy;  
But getting cramps instead, and needing change,  
A would-be pagan next:

Young Hamlet sat

A guest with five of somewhat riper age  
At breakfast with Horatio, a friend  
With few opinions, but of faithful heart,  
Quick to detect the fibrous spreading roots  
Of character that feed men's theories,  
Yet cloaking weaknesses with charity  
And ready in all service save rebuke.  
With ebb of breakfast and the cider-cup  
Came high debate: the others seated there

Were Osric, spinner of fine sentences,  
 A delicate insect creeping over life  
 Feeding on molecules of floral breath,  
 And weaving gossamer to trap the sun;  
 Laertes, ardent, rash, and radical;  
 Discursive Rosencranz, grave Guildenstern,  
 And he for whom the social meal was made —  
 The polished priest, a tolerant listener,  
 Disposed to give a hearing to the lost,  
 And breakfast with them ere they went below.

From alpine metaphysic glaciers first  
 The talk sprang copious; the themes were old,  
 But so is human breath, so infant eyes,  
 The daily nurslings of creative light.  
 Small words held mighty meanings: Matter,  
 Force,  
 Self, Not-self, Being, Seeming, Space and Time —  
 Plebeian toilers on the dusty road  
 Of daily traffic, turned to Genii  
 And cloudy giants darkening sun and moon.  
 Creation was reversed in human talk:  
 None said, "Let Darkness be," but Darkness was;  
 And in it weltered with Teutonic ease,  
 An argumentative Leviathan,  
 Blowing cascades from out his element,  
 The thunderous Rosencranz, till

"Truce, I beg!"

Said Osric, with nice accent. "I abhor  
 That battling of the ghosts, that strife of terms  
 For utmost lack of colour, form, and breath,  
 That tasteless squabbling called Philosophy  
 As if a blue-winged butterfly afloat  
 For just three days above the Italian fields,  
 Poising in sunshine, fluttering toward its bride,  
 Should fast and speculate, considering

What were if it were not? or what now is  
 Instead of that which seems to be itself?  
 Its deepest wisdom surely were to be  
 A sipping, marrying, blue-winged butterfly;  
 Since utmost speculation on itself  
 Were but a three days' living of worse sort —  
 A bruising struggle all within the bounds  
 Of butterfly existence."

" I protest,"

Burst in Laertes, " against arguments  
 That start with calling me a butterfly,  
 A bubble, spark, or other metaphor  
 Which carries your conclusions as a phrase  
 In quibbling law will carry property.  
 Put a thin sucker for my human lips  
 Fed at a mother's breast, who now needs food  
 That I will earn for her; put bubbles blown  
 From frothy thinking, for the joy, the love,  
 The wants, the pity, and the fellowship  
 (The ocean deeps I might say, were I bent  
 On bandying metaphors) that make a man —  
 Why, rhetoric brings within your easy reach  
 Conclusions worthy of — a butterfly.  
 The universe, I hold, is no charade,  
 No acted pun unriddled by a word,  
 Nor pain a decimal diminishing  
 With hocus-pocus of a dot or naught.  
 For those who know it, pain is solely pain:  
 Not any letters of the alphabet  
 Wrought syllogistically pattern-wise,  
 Nor any cluster of fine images,  
 Nor any missing of their figured dance  
 By blundering molecules. Analysis  
 May show you the right physic for the ill,  
 Teaching the molecules to find their dance,  
 Instead of sipping at the heart of flowers.

But spare me your analogies, that hold  
 Such insight as the figure of a crow  
 And bar of music put to signify  
 A crowbar."

Said the Priest, "There I agree —  
 Would add that sacramental grace is grace  
 Which to be known must first be felt, with all  
 The strengthening influxes that come by prayer.  
 I note this passingly — would not delay  
 The conversation's tenor, save to hint  
 That taking stand with Rosencranz one sees  
 Final equivalence of all we name  
 Our Good and Ill — their difference meanwhile  
 Being inborn prejudice that plumps you down  
 An Ego, brings a weight into your scale  
 Forcing a standard. That resistless weight  
 Obstinate, irremovable by thought,  
 Persisting through disproof, an ache, a need  
 That spaceless stays where sharp analysis  
 Has shown a plenum filled without it — what  
 If this, to use your phrase, were just that Being  
 Not looking solely, grasping from the dark,  
 Weighing the difference you call Ego? This  
 Gives you persistence, regulates the flux  
 With strict relation rooted in the All.  
 Who is he of your late philosophers  
 Takes the true name of Being to be Will?  
 I — nay, the Church objects naught, is content  
 Reason has reached its utmost negative,  
 Physic and metaphysic meet in the inane  
 And backward shrink to intense prejudice,  
 Making their absolute and homogene  
 A loaded relative, a choice to be  
 Whatever is — supposed: a What is not.  
 The Church demands no more, has standing room  
 And basis for her doctrine: this (no more) —



That the strong bias which we name the Soul,  
 Though fed and clad by dissoluble waves,  
 Has antecedent quality, and rules  
 By veto or consent the strife of thought,  
 Making arbitrament that we call faith.”  
 Here was brief silence, till young Hamlet spoke.  
 “I crave direction, Father, how to know  
 The sign of that imperative whose right  
 To sway my act in face of thronging doubts  
 Were an oracular gem in price beyond  
 Urim and Thummim lost to Israel.  
 That bias of the soul, that conquering die  
 Loaded with golden emphasis of Will —  
 How find it where resolve, once made, becomes  
 The rash exclusion of an opposite  
 Which draws the stronger as I turn aloof.”

“I think I hear a bias in your words,”  
 The Priest said mildly — “that strong natural bent  
 Which we call hunger. What more positive  
 Than appetite? — of spirit or of flesh,  
 I care not — ‘sense of need’ were truer phrase.  
 You hunger for authoritative right,  
 And yet discern no difference of tones,  
 No weight of rod that marks imperial rule?  
 Laertes granting, I will put your case  
 In analogic form: the doctors hold  
 Hunger which gives no relish — save caprice  
 That tasting venison fancies mellow pears —  
 A symptom of disorder, and prescribe  
 Strict discipline. Were I physician here  
 I would prescribe that exercise of soul  
 Which lies in full obedience: you ask,  
 Obedience to what? The answer lies  
 Within the word itself; for how obey  
 What has no rule, asserts no absolute claim?”



Take inclination, taste — why, that is you,  
 No rule above you. Science, reasoning  
 On nature's order — they exist and move  
 Solely by disputation, hold no pledge  
 Of final consequence, but push the swing  
 Where Epicurus and the Stoic sit  
 In endless see-saw. One authority,  
 And only one, says simply this, Obey:  
 Place yourself in that current (test it so!)  
 Of spiritual order where at least  
 Lies promise of a high communion,  
 A Head informing members, Life that breathes  
 With gift of forces over and above  
 The *plus* of arithmetic interchange.  
 'The Church too has a body,' you object,  
 'Can be dissected, put beneath the lens  
 And shown the merest continuity  
 Of all existence else beneath the sun.'  
 I grant you; but the lens will not disprove  
 A present which eludes it. Take your wit,  
 Your highest passion, widest-reaching thought:  
 Show their conditions if you will or can,  
 But though you saw the final atom-dance  
 Making each molecule that stands for sign  
 Of love being present, where is still your love?  
 How measure that, how certify its weight?  
 And so I say, the body of the Church  
 Carries a Presence, promises and gifts  
 Never disproved — whose argument is found  
 In lasting failure of the search elsewhere  
 For what it holds to satisfy man's need.  
 But I grow lengthy: my excuse must be  
 Your question, Hamlet, which has probed right  
     through  
 To the pith of our belief. And I have robbed  
 Myself of pleasure as a listener.

'Tis noon, I see; and my appointment stands  
For half-past twelve with Voltimand. Good-bye."

Brief parting, brief regret — sincere, but quenched  
In fumes of best Havana, which consoles  
For lack of other certitude. Then said,  
Mildly sarcastic, quiet Guildenstern:

"I marvel how the Father gave new charm  
To weak conclusions: I was half convinced  
The poorest reasoner made the finest man,  
And held his logic lovelier for its limp."

"I fain would hear," said Hamlet, "how you find  
A stronger footing than the Father gave.  
How base your self-resistance save on faith  
In some invisible Order, higher Right  
Than changing impulse. What does Reason bid?  
To take as fullest rationality  
What offers best solution: so the Church.  
Science, detecting hydrogen aflame  
Outside our firmament, leaves mystery  
Whole and untouched beyond; nay, in our blood  
And in the potent atoms of each germ  
The Secret lives — envelops, penetrates  
Whatever sense perceives or thought divines.  
Science, whose soul is explanation, halts  
With hostile front at mystery. The Church  
Takes mystery as her empire, brings its wealth  
Of possibility to fill the void  
'Twixt contradictions — warrants so a faith  
Defying sense and all its ruthless train  
Of arrogant 'Therefore.' Science with her lens  
Dissolves the Forms that made the other half  
Of all our love, which thenceforth widowed lives  
To gaze with maniac stare at what is not.  
The Church explains not, governs — feeds resolve

By vision fraught with heart-experience  
And human yearning."

"Ay," said Guildenstern,  
With friendly nod, "the Father, I can see,  
Has caught you up in his air-chariot.  
His thought takes rainbow-bridges, out of reach  
By solid obstacles, evaporates  
The coarse and common into subtilties,  
Insists that what is real in the Church  
Is something out of evidence, and begs  
(Just in parenthesis) you'll never mind  
What stares you in the face and bruises you.  
Why, by his method I could justify  
Each superstition and each tyranny  
That ever rode upon the back of man,  
Pretending fitness for his sole defence  
Against life's evil. How can aught subsist  
That holds no theory of gain or good?  
Despots with terror in their red right hand  
Must argue good to helpers and themselves,  
Must let submission hold a core of gain  
To make their slaves choose life. Their theory,  
Abstracting inconvenience of racks,  
Whip-lashes, dragonnades and all things coarse  
Inherent in the fact or concrete mass,  
Presents the pure idea — utmost good  
Secured by Order only to be found  
In strict subordination, hierarchy  
Of forces where, by nature's law, the strong  
Has rightful empire, rule of weaker proved  
Mere dissolution. What can you object?  
The Inquisition — if you turn away  
From narrow notice how the scent of gold  
Has guided sense of damning heresy —  
The Inquisition is sublime, is love  
Hindering the spread of poison in men's souls:

The flames are nothing: only smaller pain  
 To hinder greater, or the pain of one  
 To save the many, such as throbs at heart  
 Of every system born into the world.  
 So of the Church as high communion  
 Of Head with members, fount of spirit force  
 Beyond the calculus, and carrying proof  
 In her sole power to satisfy man's need:  
 That seems ideal truth as clear as lines  
 That, necessary though invisible, trace  
 The balance of the planets and the sun —  
 Until I find a hitch in that last claim.  
 'To satisfy man's need.' Sir, that depends:  
 We settle first the measure of man's need  
 Before we grant capacity to fill.  
 John, James, or Thomas, you may satisfy:  
 But since you choose ideals I demand  
 Your Church shall satisfy ideal man,  
 His utmost reason and his utmost love.  
 And say these rest a-hungered — find no scheme  
 Content them both, but hold the world accursed,  
 A Calvary where Reason mocks at Love,  
 And Love forsaken sends out orphan cries  
 Hopeless of answer; still the soul remains  
 Larger, diviner than your half-way Church,  
 Which racks your reason into false consent,  
 And soothes your Love with sops of selfish-  
 ness."

"There I am with you," cried Laertes. "What  
 To me are any dictates, though they came  
 With thunders from the Mount, if still within  
 I see a higher Right, a higher Good  
 Compelling love and worship? Though the earth  
 Held force electric to discern and kill  
 Each thinking rebel — what is martyrdom  
 But death-defying utterance of belief,

Which being mine remains my truth supreme  
 Though solitary as the throb of pain  
 Lying outside the pulses of the world?  
 Obedience is good: ay, but to what?  
 And for what ends? For say that I rebel  
 Against your rule as devilish, or as rule  
 Of thunder-guiding powers that deny  
 Man's highest benefit: rebellion then  
 Were strict obedience to another rule  
 Which bids me flout your thunder."

"Lo you now!"

Said Osric, delicately, "how you come,  
 Laertes mine, with all your warring zeal  
 As Python-slayer of the present age —  
 Cleansing all social swamps by darting rays  
 Of dubious doctrine, hot with energy  
 Of private judgment and disgust for doubt —  
 To state my thesis; which you most abhor  
 When sung in Daphnis-notes beneath the pines  
 To gentle rush of waters. Your belief —  
 In essence what is it but simply Taste?  
 I urge with you exemption from all claims  
 That come from other than my proper will,  
 An Ultimate within to balance yours,  
 A solid meeting you, excluding you,  
 Till you show fuller force by entering  
 My spiritual space and crushing Me  
 To a subordinate complement of You:  
 Such ultimate must stand alike for all.  
 Preach your crusade, then: all will join who  
 like  
 The hurly-burly of aggressive creeds;  
 Still your unpleasant Ought, your itch to choose  
 What grates upon the sense, is simply Taste,  
 Differs, I think, from mine (permit the word,  
 Discussion forces it) in being bad."



The tone was too polite to breed offence,  
 Showing a tolerance of what was "bad"  
 Becoming courtiers. Louder Rosencranz  
 Took up the ball with rougher movement, wont  
 To show contempt for doting reasoners  
 Who hugged some reasons with a preference,  
 As warm Laertes did: he gave five puffs  
 Intolerantly sceptical, then said:  
 "Your human good, which you would make  
     supreme,  
 How do you know it? Has it shown its face  
 In adamantine type, with features clear,  
 As this republic, or that monarchy?  
 As federal grouping, or municipal?  
 Equality, or finely shaded lines  
 Of social difference? ecstatic whirl  
 And draught intense of passionate joy and pain,  
 Or sober self-control that starves its youth  
 And lives to wonder what the world calls joy?  
 Is it in sympathy that shares men's pangs,  
 Or in cool brains that can explain them well?  
 Is it in labour or in laziness?  
 In training for the tug of rivalry  
 To be admired, or in the admiring soul?  
 In risk or certitude? In battling rage  
 And hardy challenges of Protean luck,  
 Or in a sleek and rural apathy  
 Full fed with sameness? Pray define your Good  
 Beyond rejection by majority;  
 Next, how it may subsist without the Ill  
 Which seems its only outline. Show a world  
 Of pleasure not resisted; or a world  
 Of pressure equalized, yet various  
 In action formative; for that will serve  
 As illustration of your human good —  
 Which at its perfecting (your goal of hope)

Will not be straight extinct, or fall to sleep  
 In the deep bosom of the Unchangeable.  
 What will you work for, then, and call it good  
 With full and certain vision — good for aught  
 Save partial ends which happen to be yours?  
 How will you get your stringency to bind  
 Thought or desire in demonstrated tracks  
 Which are but waves within a balanced whole?  
 Is 'relative' the magic word that turns  
 Your flux mercurial of good to gold?  
 Why, that analysis at which you rage  
 As anti-social force that sweeps you down  
 The world in one cascade of molecules,  
 Is brother 'relative' — and grins at you  
 Like any convict whom you thought to send  
 Outside society, till this enlarged  
 And meant New England and Australia too.  
 The Absolute is your shadow, and the space  
 Which you say might be real were you milled  
 To curves pellicular, the thinnest thin,  
 Equation of no thickness, is still you."

"Abstracting all that makes him clubbable,"  
 Horatio interposed. But Rosencranz,  
 Deaf as the angry turkey-cock whose ears  
 Are plugged by swollen tissues when he scolds  
 At men's pretensions: "Pooh, your 'Relative'  
 Shuts you in, hopeless, with your progeny  
 As in a Hunger-tower; your social good,  
 Like other deities by turn supreme,  
 Is transient reflex of a prejudice,  
 Anthology of causes and effects  
 To suit the mood of fanatics who lead  
 The mood of tribes or nations. I admit  
 If you could show a sword, nay, chance of sword  
 Hanging conspicuous to their inward eyes

With edge so constant threatening as to sway  
 All greed and lust by terror; and a law  
 Clear-writ and proven as the law supreme  
 Which that dread sword enforces — then your  
     Right,

Duty, or social Good, were it once brought  
 To common measure with the potent law,  
 Would dip the scale, would put unchanging marks  
 Of wisdom or of folly on each deed,  
 And warrant exhortation. Until then,  
 Where is your standard or criterion?  
 'What always, everywhere, by all men' — why,  
 That were but Custom, and your system needs  
 Ideals never yet incorporate,  
 The imminent doom of Custom. Can you find  
 Appeal beyond the sentience in each man?  
 Frighten the blind with scarecrows? raise an awe  
 Of things unseen where appetite commands  
 Chambers of imagery in the soul  
 At all its avenues? — You chant your hymns  
 To Evolution, on your altar lay  
 A sacred egg called Progress: have you proved  
 A Best unique where all is relative,  
 And where each change is loss as well as gain?  
 The age of healthy Saurians, well supplied  
 With heat and prey, will balance well enough  
 A human age where maladies are strong  
 And pleasures feeble; wealth a monster gorged  
 'Mid hungry populations; intellect  
 Aproned in laboratories, bent on proof  
 That *this* is *that* and both are good for naught  
 Save feeding error through a weary life;  
 While Art and Poesy struggle like poor ghosts  
 To hinder cock-crow and the dreadful light,  
 Lurking in darkness and the charnel-house,  
 Or like two stalwart graybeards, imbecile

With limbs still active, playing at belief,  
 That hunt the slipper, foot-ball, hide-and-peek,  
 Are sweetly merry, donning pinafores  
 And lispng emulously in their speech.  
 O human race! Is this then all thy gain? —  
 Working at disproof, playing at belief,  
 Debate on causes, distaste of effects,  
 Power to transmute all elements, and lack  
 Of any power to sway the fatal skill  
 And make thy lot aught else than rigid doom?  
 The Saurians were better. — Guildenstern,  
 Pass me the taper. Still the human curse  
 Has mitigation in the best cigars.”  
 Then swift Laertes, not without a glare  
 Of leonine wrath: “ I thank thee for that word:  
 That one confession, were I Socrates,  
 Should force you onward till you ran your head  
 At your own image — flatly gave the lie  
 To all your blasphemy of that human good  
 Which bred and nourished you to sit at ease  
 And learnedly deny it. Say the world  
 Groans ever with the pangs of doubtful births:  
 Say, life 's a poor donation at the best —  
 Wisdom a yearning after nothingness —  
 Nature's great vision and the thrill supreme  
 Of thought-fed passion but a weary play —  
 I argue not against you. Who can prove  
 Wit to be witty when with deeper ground  
 Dulness intuitive declares wit dull?  
 If life is worthless to you — why, it is.  
 You only know how little love you feel  
 To give you fellowship, how little force  
 Responsive to the quality of things.  
 Then end your life, throw off the unsought  
     yoke.  
 If not — if you remain to taste cigars,



Choose racy diction, perorate at large  
 With tacit scorn of meaner men who win  
 No wreath or tripos — then admit at least  
 A possible Better in the seeds of earth;  
 Acknowledge debt to that laborious life  
 Which, sifting evermore the mingled seeds,  
 Testing the Possible with patient skill,  
 And daring ill in presence of a good  
 For futures to inherit, made your lot  
 One you would choose rather than end it, nay,  
 Rather than, say, some twenty million lots  
 Of fellow-Britons toiling all to make  
 That nation, that community, whereon  
 You feed and thrive and talk philosophy.  
 I am no optimist whose faith must hang  
 On hard pretence that pain is beautiful  
 And agony explained for men at ease  
 By virtue's exercise in pitying it.  
 But this I hold: that he who takes one gift  
 Made for him by the hopeful work of man,  
 Who tastes sweet bread, walks where he will  
     unarmed,  
 His shield and warrant the invisible law,  
 Who owns a hearth and household charities,  
 Who clothes his body and his sentient soul  
 With skill and thoughts of men, and yet denies  
 A human good worth toiling for, is cursed  
 With worse negation than the poet feigned  
 In Mephistopheles. The Devil spins  
 His wire-drawn argument against all good  
 With sense of brimstone as his private lot,  
 And never drew a solace from the Earth."

Laertes fuming paused, and Guildenstern  
 Took up with cooler skill the fusillade:  
 "I meet your deadliest challenge, Rosencranz:



Where get, you say, a binding law, a rule  
 Enforced by sanction, and Ideal throned  
 With thunder in its hand? I answer, there  
 Whence every faith and rule has drawn its force  
 Since human consciousness awaking owned  
 An Outward, whose unconquerable sway  
 Resisted first and then subdued desire  
 By pressure of the dire Impossible  
 Urging to possible ends the active soul  
 And shaping so its terror and its love.  
 Why, you have said it — threats and promises  
 Depend on each man's sentience for their force:  
 All sacred rules, imagined or revealed,  
 Can have no form or potency apart  
 From the percipient and emotive mind.  
 God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,  
 Must first be framed in man, as music is,  
 Before they live outside him as a law.  
 And still they grow and shape themselves anew,  
 With fuller concentration in their life  
 Of inward and of outward energies  
 Blending to make the last result called Man,  
 Which means, not this or that philosopher  
 Looking through beauty into blankness, not  
 The swindler who has sent his fruitful lie  
 By the last telegram: it means the tide  
 Of needs reciprocal, toil, trust, and love —  
 The surging multitude of human claims  
 Which make 'a presence not to be put by'  
 Above the horizon of the general soul.  
 Is inward Reason shrunk to subtleties,  
 And inward wisdom pining passion-starved? —  
 The outward Reason has the world in store,  
 Regenerates passion with the stress of want,  
 Regenerates knowledge with discovery,  
 Shows sly rapacious Self a blunderer,

Widens dependence, knits the social whole  
 In sensible relation more defined.  
 Do Boards and dirty-handed millionnaires  
 Govern the planetary system? — sway  
 The pressure of the Universe? — decide  
 That man henceforth shall retrogress to ape,  
 Emptied of every sympathetic thrill  
 The All has wrought in him? dam up henceforth  
 The flood of human claims as private force  
 To turn their wheels and make a private hell  
 For fish-pond to their mercantile domain?  
 What are they but a parasitic growth  
 On the vast real and ideal world  
 Of man and nature blent in one divine?  
 Why, take your closing dirge — say evil grows  
 And good is dwindling; science mere decay,  
 Mere dissolution of ideal wholes  
 Which through the ages past alone have made  
 The earth and firmament of human faith;  
 Say, the small arc of Being we call man  
 Is near its mergence, what seems growing life  
 Naught but a hurrying change toward lower types,  
 The ready rankness of degeneracy.  
 Well, they who mourn for the world's dying  
     good  
 May take their common sorrows for a rock,  
 On it erect religion and a church,  
 A worship, rites, and passionate piety —  
 The worship of the Best though crucified  
 And God-forsaken in its dying pangs;  
 The sacramental rites of fellowship  
 In common woe; visions that purify  
 Through admiration and despairing love  
 Which keep their spiritual life intact  
 Beneath the murderous clutches of disproof  
 And feed a martyr-strength."

“ Religion high! ”

(Rosencranz here) “ But with communicants  
Few as the cedars upon Lebanon —  
A child might count them. What the world de-  
mands  
Is faith coercive of the multitude.”

“ Tush, Guildenstern, you granted him too much,”  
Burst in Laertes; “ I will never grant  
One inch of law to feeble blasphemies  
Which hold no higher ratio to life —  
Full vigorous human life that peopled earth  
And wrought and fought and loved and bravely  
died —

Than the sick morning glooms of debauchees.  
Old nations breed old children, wizened babes  
Whose youth is languid and incredulous,  
Weary of life without the will to die;  
Their passions visionary appetites  
Of bloodless spectres wailing that the world  
For lack of substance slips from out their grasp;  
Their thoughts the withered husks of all things  
dead,

Holding no force of germs instinct with life,  
Which never hesitates but moves and grows.  
Yet hear them boast in screams their godlike ill,  
Excess of knowing! Fie on you, Rosencranz!  
You lend your brains and fine-dividing tongue  
For bass-notes to this shrivelled crudity,  
This immature decrepitude that strains  
To fill our ears and claim the prize of strength  
For mere unmanliness. Out on them all! —  
Wits, puling minstrels, and philosophers,  
Who living softly prate of suicide,  
And suck the commonwealth to feed their ease  
While they vent epigrams and threnodies,

Mocking or wailing all the eager work  
Which makes that public store whereon they  
feed.

Is wisdom flattened sense and mere distaste?  
Why, any superstition warm with love,  
Inspired with purpose, wild with energy  
That streams resistless through its ready frame,  
Has more of human truth within its life  
Than souls that look through colour into naught —  
Whose brain, too unimpassioned for delight,  
Has feeble ticklings of a vanity  
Which finds the universe beneath its mark,  
And scorning the blue heavens as merely blue  
Can only say, 'What then?' — pre-eminent  
In wondrous want of likeness to their kind,  
Founding that worship of sterility  
Whose one supreme is vacillating Will  
Which makes the Light, then says, 'T were better  
not.' "

Here rash Laertes brought his Handel-strain  
As of some angry Polypheme, to pause;  
And Osric, shocked at ardours out of taste,  
Relieved the audience with a tenor voice  
And delicate delivery.

“ For me,

I range myself in line with Rosencranz  
Against all schemes, religious or profane,  
That flaunt a Good as pretext for a lash  
To flog us all who have the better taste,  
Into conformity, requiring me  
At peril of the thong and sharp disgrace  
To care how mere Philistines pass their lives;  
Whether the English pauper-total grows  
From one to two before the naughts; how far  
Teuton will outbreed Roman; if the class  
Of proletaires will make a federal band

To bind all Europe and America,  
 Throw, in their wrestling, every government,  
 Snatch the world's purse and keep the guillotine:  
 Or else (admitting these are casualties)  
 Driving my soul with scientific hail  
 That shuts the landscape out with particles;  
 Insisting that the Palingenesis  
 Means telegraphs and measure of the rate  
 At which the stars move — nobody knows where.  
 So far, my Rosencranz, we are at one.  
 But not when you blaspheme the life of Art,  
 The sweet perennial youth of Poesy,  
 Which asks no logic but its sensuous growth,  
 No right but loveliness; which fearless strolls  
 Betwixt the burning mountain and the sea,  
 Reckless of earthquake and the lava stream,  
 Filling its hour with beauty. It knows naught  
 Of bitter strife, denial, grim resolve.  
 Sour resignation, busy emphasis  
 Of fresh illusions named the new-born True,  
 Old Error's latest child; but as a lake  
 Images all things, yet within its depths  
 Dreams them all lovelier — thrills with sound  
 And makes a harp of plenteous liquid chords —  
 So Art or Poesy: we its votaries  
 Are the Olympians, fortunately born  
 From the elemental mixture; 't is our lot  
 To pass more swiftly than the Delian God,  
 But still the earth breaks into flowers for us,  
 And mortal sorrows when they reach our ears  
 Are dying falls to melody divine.  
 Hatred, war, vice, crime, sin, those human storms,  
 Cyclones, floods, what you will — outbursts of  
 force —  
 Feed art with contrast, give the grander touch  
 To the master's pencil and the poet's song,



Serve as Vesuvian fires or navies tossed  
 On yawning waters, which when viewed afar  
 Deepen the calm sublime of those choice souls  
 Who keep the heights of poesy and turn  
 A fleckless mirror to the various world,  
 Giving its many-named and fitful flux  
 An imaged, harmless, spiritual life,  
 With pure selection, native to art's frame,  
 Of beauty only, save its minor scale  
 Of ill and pain to give the ideal joy  
 A keener edge. This is a mongrel globe;  
 All finer being wrought from its coarse earth  
 Is but accepted privilege: what else  
 Your boasted virtue, which proclaims itself  
 A good above the average consciousness?  
 Nature exists by partiality  
 (Each planet's poise must carry two extremes  
 With verging breadths of minor wretchedness):  
 We are her favourites and accept our wings.  
 For your accusal, Rosencranz, that art  
 Shares in the dread and weakness of the time,  
 I hold it null; since art or poesy pure,  
 Being blameless by all standards save her own,  
 Takes no account of modern or antique  
 In morals, science, or philosophy:  
 No dull elenchus makes a yoke for her,  
 Whose law and measure are the sweet consent  
 Of sensibilities that move apart  
 From rise or fall of systems, states or creeds —  
 Apart from what Philistines call man's weal."

" Ay, we all know those votaries of the Muse  
 Ravished with singing till they quite forgot  
 Their manhood, sang, and gaped, and took no  
     food,  
 Then died of emptiness, and for reward

Lived on as grasshoppers" — Laertes thus:  
 But then he checked himself as one who feels  
 His muscles dangerous, and Guildenstern  
 Filled up the pause with calmer confidence.

"You use your wings, my Osric, poise yourself  
 Safely outside all reach of argument,  
 Then dogmatize at will (a method known  
 To ancient women and philosophers,  
 Nay, to Philistines whom you most abhor);  
 Else, could an arrow reach you, I should ask  
 Whence came taste, beauty, sensibilities  
 Refined to preference infallible?  
 Doubtless, ye 're gods — these odours ye inhale,  
 A sacrificial scent. But how, I pray,  
 Are odours made, if not by gradual change  
 Of sense or substance? Is your beautiful  
 A seedless, rootless flower, or has it grown  
 With human growth, which means the rising sun  
 Of human struggle, order, knowledge? — sense  
 Trained to a fuller record, more exact —  
 To truer guidance of each passionate force?  
 Get me your roseate flesh without the blood;  
 Get fine aromas without structure wrought  
 From simpler being into manifold:  
 Then and then only flaunt your Beautiful  
 As what can live apart from thought, creeds, states.  
 Which mean life's structure. Osric, I beseech —  
 The infallible should be more catholic —  
 Join in a war-dance with the cannibals,  
 Hear Chinese music, love a face tattooed,  
 Give adoration to a pointed skull,  
 And think the Hindu Siva looks divine:  
 'T is art, 't is poesy. Say, you object:  
 How came you by that lofty dissidence,  
 If not through changes in the social man

Widening his consciousness from Here and Now  
 To larger wholes beyond the reach of sense;  
 Controlling to a fuller harmony  
 The thrill of passion and the rule of fact;  
 And paling false ideals in the light  
 Of full-rayed sensibilities which blend  
 Truth and desire? Taste, beauty, what are they  
 But the soul's choice toward perfect bias wrought  
 By finer balance of a fuller growth —  
 Sense brought to subtlest metamorphosis  
 Through love, thought, joy — the general human  
 store

Which grows from all life's functions? As the  
 plant

Holds its corolla, purple, delicate,  
 Solely as outflush of that energy  
 Which moves transformingly in root and branch.”  
 Guildenstern paused, and Hamlet quivering  
 Since Osric spoke, in transit imminent  
 From catholic striving into laxity,  
 Ventured his word. “Seems to me, Guildenstern,  
 Your argument, though shattering Osric's point  
 That sensibilities can move apart  
 From social order, yet has not annulled  
 His thesis that the life of poesy  
 (Admitting it must grow from out the whole)  
 Has separate functions, a transfigured realm  
 Freed from the rigours of the practical,  
 Where what is hidden from the grosser world —  
 Stormed down by roar of engines and the shouts  
 Of eager concourse — rises beauteous  
 As voice of water-drops in sapphire caves;  
 A realm where finest spirits have free sway  
 In exquisite selection, uncontrolled  
 By hard material necessity  
 Of cause and consequence. For you will grant

The Ideal has discoveries which ask  
 No test, no faith, save that we joy in them:  
 A new-found continent, with spreading lands  
 Where pleasure charters all, where virtue, rank,  
 Use, right, and truth have but one name, Delight.  
 Thus Art's creations, when etherealized  
 To least admixture of the grosser fact  
 Delight may stamp as highest."

"Possible!"

Said Guildenstern, with touch of weariness,  
 "But then we might dispute of what is gross,  
 What high, what low."

"Nay," said Laertes, "ask  
 The mightiest makers who have reigned, still  
 reign  
 Within the ideal realm. See if their thought  
 Be drained of practice and the thick warm blood  
 Of hearts that beat in action various  
 Through the wide drama of the struggling world.  
 Good-bye, Horatio."

Each now said "Good-bye."  
 Such breakfast, such beginning of the day  
 Is more than half the whole. The sun was hot  
 On southward branches of the meadow elms,  
 The shadows slowly farther crept and veered  
 Like changing memories, and Hamlet strolled  
 Alone and dubious on the empurpled path  
 Between the waving grasses of new June  
 Close by the stream where well-compacted boats  
 Were moored or moving with a lazy creak  
 To the soft dip of oars. All sounds were light  
 As tiny silver bells upon the robes  
 Of hovering silence. Birds made twitterings

That seemed but Silence' self o'erfull of love.  
 'T was invitation all to sweet repose;  
 And Hamlet, drowsy with the mingled draughts  
 Of cider and conflicting sentiments,  
 Chose a green couch and watched with half-closed  
 eyes

The meadow-road, the stream and dreamy lights,  
 Until they merged themselves in sequence strange  
 With undulating ether, time, the soul,  
 The will supreme, the individual claim,  
 The social Ought, the lyrist's liberty,  
 Democritus, Pythagoras, in talk  
 With Anselm, Darwin, Comte, and Schopenhauer,  
 The poets rising slow from out their tombs  
 Summoned as arbiters — that border-world  
 Of dozing, ere the sense is fully locked.  
 And then he dreamed a dream so luminous  
 He woke (he says) convinced; but what it taught  
 Withholds as yet. Perhaps those graver shades  
 Admonished him that visions told in haste  
 Part with their virtues to the squandering lips  
 And leave the soul in wider emptiness.

April, 1874



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## TWO LOVERS

---

**T**WO lovers by a moss-grown spring:  
They leaned soft cheeks together there,  
Mingled the dark and sunny hair,  
And heard the wooing thrushes sing.  
    O budding time!  
    O love's blest prime!

Two wedded from the portal step:  
The bells made happy carollings,  
The air was soft as fanning wings,  
White petals on the pathway slept.  
    O pure-eyed bride!  
    O tender pride!

Two faces o'er a cradle bent:  
Two hands above the head were locked:  
These pressed each other while they rocked,  
Those watched a life that love had sent.  
    O solemn hour!  
    O hidden power!

Two parents by the evening fire:  
The red light fell about their knees  
On heads that rose by slow degrees  
Like buds upon the lily spire.  
    O patient life!  
    O tender strife!

442 POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT

The two still sat together there,  
The red light shone about their knees;  
But all the heads by slow degrees  
Had gone and left that lonely pair.  
O voyage fast!  
O vanished past!

The red light shone upon the floor  
And made the space between them wide;  
They drew their chairs up side by side,  
Their pale cheeks joined, and said, "Once more!"  
O memories!  
O past that is!

---

## SELF AND LIFE

---

### SELF

**C**HANGEFUL comrade, Life of mine,  
Before we two must part,  
I will tell thee, thou shalt say,  
What thou hast been and art.  
Ere I lose my hold of thee  
Justify thyself to me.

### LIFE

I was thy warmth upon thy mother's knee  
When light and love within her eyes were one;  
We laughed together by the laurel-tree,  
Culling warm daisies 'neath the sloping sun;

We heard the chickens' lazy croon,  
Where the trellised woodbines grew,  
And all the summer afternoon  
Mystic gladness o'er thee threw.  
Was it person? Was it thing?  
Was it touch or whispering?  
It was bliss and it was I:  
Bliss was what thou knew'st me by.

### SELF

Soon I knew thee more by Fear  
And sense of what was not,  
Haunting all I held most dear;  
I had a double lot:  
Ardour, cheated with alloy,  
Wept the more for dreams of joy.

## LIFE

Remember how thy ardour's magic sense  
 Made poor things rich to thee and small things  
 great;  
 How hearth and garden, field and bushy fence,  
 Were thy own eager love incorporate;

And how the solemn, splendid Past  
 O'er thy early widened earth  
 Made grandeur, as on sunset cast  
 Dark elms near take mighty girth.  
 Hands and feet were tiny still  
 When we knew the historic thrill,  
 Breathed deep breath in heroes dead,  
 Tasted the immortals' bread.

## SELF

Seeing what I might have been  
 Reproved the thing I was,  
 Smoke on heaven's clearest sheen,  
 The speck within the rose.  
 By revered ones' frailties stung  
 Reverence was with anguish wrung.

## LIFE

But all thy anguish and thy discontent  
 Was growth of mine, the elemental strife  
 Toward feeling manifold with vision blent  
 To wider thought: I was no vulgar life

That, like water-mirrored ape,  
 Not discerns the thing it sees,  
 Nor knows its own in others' shape,  
 Railing, scorning, at its ease.

Half man's truth must hidden lie  
If unlit by Sorrow's eye.  
I by Sorrow wrought in thee  
Willing pain of ministry.

## SELF

Slowly was the lesson taught  
Through passion, error, care;  
Insight was the loathing fraught  
And effort with despair.  
Written on the wall I saw  
"Bow!" I knew, not loved, the law.

## LIFE

But then I brought a love that wrote within  
The law of gratitude, and made thy heart  
Beat to the heavenly tune of seraphim  
Whose only joy in having is, to impart:

Till thou, poor Self — despite thy ire,  
Wrestling 'gainst my mingled share,  
Thy faults, hard falls, and vain desire  
Still to be what others were —  
Filled, o'erflowed with tenderness  
Seeming more as thou wert less,  
Knew me through that anguish past  
As a fellowship more vast.

## SELF

Yea, I embrace thee, changeful Life!  
Far-sent, unchosen mate!  
Self and thou, no more at strife,  
Shall wed in hallowed state.  
Willing spousals now shall prove  
Life is justified by love.



---

“SWEET EVENINGS COME AND GO,  
LOVE”

---

La noche buena se viene,  
La noche buena se va,  
Y nosotros nos iremos  
Y no volveremos mas.

*Old Villancico.*

**S**WEET evenings come and go, love,  
They came and went of yore:  
This evening of our life, love,  
Shall go and come no more.

When we have passed away, love,  
All things will keep their name;  
But yet no life on earth, love,  
With ours will be the same.

The daisies will be there, love,  
The stars in heaven will shine:  
I shall not feel thy wish, love,  
Nor thou my hand in thine.

A better time will come, love,  
And better souls be born:  
I would not be the best, love,  
To leave thee now forlorn.

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## THE DEATH OF MOSES

---

**M**OSES, who spake with God as with his  
friend,  
And ruled his people with the twofold  
power

Of wisdom that can dare and still be meek,  
Was writing his last word, the sacred name  
Unutterable of that Eternal Will  
Which was and is and evermore shall be.  
Yet was his task not finished, for the flock  
Needed its shepherd and the life-taught sage  
Leaves no successor; but to chosen men,  
The rescuers and guides of Israel,  
A death was given called the Death of Grace,  
Which freed them from the burden of the flesh  
But left them rulers of the multitude  
And loved companions of the lonely. This  
Was God's last gift to Moses, this the hour  
When soul must part from self and be but soul.

God spake to Gabriel, the messenger  
Of mildest death that draws the parting life  
Gently, as when a little rosy child  
Lifts up its lips from off the bowl of milk  
And so draws forth a curl that dipped its gold  
In the soft white — thus Gabriel draws the  
soul.

“Go bring the soul of Moses unto me!”  
And the awe-stricken angel answered, “Lord,  
How shall I dare to take his life who lives  
Sole of his kind, not to be likened once  
In all the generations of the earth?”

Then God called Michaël, him of pensive brow,  
Snow-vest and flaming sword, who knows and  
acts:

“Go bring the spirit of Moses unto me!”  
But Michaël with such grief as angels feel,  
Loving the mortals whom they succour, pled:  
“Almighty spare me; it was I who taught  
Thy servant Moses; he is part of me  
As I of thy deep secrets, knowing them.”

Then God called Zamaël, the terrible,  
The angel of fierce death, of agony  
That comes in battle and in pestilence  
Remorseless, sudden or with lingering throes.  
And Zamaël, his raiment and broad wings  
Blood-tinctured, the dark lustre of his eyes  
Shrouding the red, fell like the gathering night  
Before the prophet. But that radiance  
Won from the heavenly presence in the mount  
Gleamed on the prophet's brow and dazzling  
pierced

Its conscious opposite: the angel turned  
His murky gaze aloof and inly said:  
“An angel this, deathless to angel's stroke.”

But Moses felt the subtly nearing dark:  
“Who art thou? and what wilt thou?” Zamaël then:  
“I am God's reaper; through the fields of life  
I gather ripened and unripened souls  
Both willing and unwilling. And I come  
Now to reap thee.” But Moses cried,  
Firm as a seer who waits the trusted sign:  
“Reap thou the fruitless plant and common herb—  
Not him who from the womb was sanctified  
To teach the law of purity and love.”  
And Zamaël baffled from his errand fled.

But Moses, pausing, in the air serene  
 Heard now that mystic whisper, far yet near,  
 The all-penetrating Voice, that said to him,  
 "Moses, the hour is come and thou must die."  
 "Lord, I obey; but thou rememberest  
 How thou, Ineffable, didst take me once  
 Within thy orb of light untouched by death."  
 Then the voice answered, "Be no more afraid:  
 With me shall be thy death and burial."  
 So Moses waited, ready now to die.

And the Lord came, invisible as a thought,  
 Three angels gleaming on his secret track,  
 Prince Michaël, Zagaël, Gabriel, charged to guard  
 The soul-forsaken body as it fell  
 And bear it to the hidden sepulchre  
 Denied forever to the search of man.  
 And the Voice said to Moses: "Close thine eyes."  
 He closed them. "Lay thine hand upon thine  
 heart,  
 And draw thy feet together." He obeyed.  
 And the Lord said, "O spirit! child of mine!  
 A hundred years and twenty thou hast dwelt  
 Within this tabernacle wrought of clay.  
 This is the end: come forth and flee to heaven."

But the grieved soul with plaintive pleading  
 cried,  
 "I love this body with a clinging love:  
 The courage fails me, Lord, to part from it."  
 "O child, come forth! for thou shalt dwell with  
 me  
 About the immortal throne where seraphs joy  
 In growing vision and in growing love."

Yet hesitating, fluttering, like the bird  
 With young wing weak and dubious, the soul

Stayed. But behold! upon the death-dewed lips  
 A kiss descended, pure, unspeakable —  
 The bodiless Love without embracing Love  
 That lingered in the body, drew it forth  
 With heavenly strength and carried it to heaven.

But now beneath the sky the watchers all,  
 Angels that keep the homes of Israel  
 Or on high purpose wander o'er the world  
 Leading the Gentiles, felt a dark eclipse:  
 The greatest ruler among men was gone.  
 And from the westward sea was heard a wail,  
 A dirge as from the isles of Javanim,  
 Crying, "Who now is left upon the earth  
 Like him to teach the right and smite the wrong?"  
 And from the East, far o'er the Syrian waste,  
 Came slowlier, sadlier, the answering dirge:  
 "No prophet like him lives or shall arise  
 In Israel or the world forevermore."

But Israel waited, looking toward the mount,  
 Till with the deepening eve the elders came  
 Saying, "His burial is hid with God.  
 We stood far off and saw the angels lift  
 His corpse aloft until they seemed a star  
 That burnt itself away within the sky."  
 The people answered with mute orphaned gaze  
 Looking for what had vanished evermore.  
 Then through the gloom without them and within  
 The spirit's shaping light, mysterious speech,  
 Invisible Will wrought clear in sculptured sound,  
 The thought-begotten daughter of the voice,  
 Thrilled on their listening sense: "He has no  
 tomb.  
 He dwells not with you dead, but lives as Law."



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## ARION

(*Herod. i. 24*)

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**A**RION, whose melodic soul  
Taught the dithyramb to roll  
Like forest fires, and sing  
Olympian suffering,

Had carried his diviner lore  
From Corinth to the sister shore  
Where Greece could largelier be,  
Branching o'er Italy.

Then weighted with his glorious name  
And bags of gold, aboard he came  
'Mid harsh seafaring men  
To Corinth bound again.

The sailors eyed the bags and thought:  
"The gold is good, the man is naught —  
And who shall track the wave  
That opens for his grave?"

With brawny arms and cruel eyes  
They press around him where he lies  
In sleep beside his lyre,  
Hearing the Muses quire.

He waked and saw this wolf-faced Death  
Breaking the dream that filled his breath  
' With inspirations strong  
Of yet unchanted song.

“ Take, take my gold and let me live! ”  
 He prayed, as kings do when they give  
     Their all with royal will,  
     Holding born kingship still.

To rob the living they refuse,  
 One death or other he must choose,  
     Either the watery pall  
     Or wounds and burial.

“ My solemn robe then let me don,  
 Give me high space to stand upon,  
     That dying I may pour  
     A song unsung before.”

It pleased them well to grant this prayer,  
 To hear for naught how it might fare  
     With men who paid their gold  
     For what a poet sold.

In flowing stole, his eyes aglow  
 With inward fire, he neared the prow  
     And took his god-like stand,  
     The cithara in hand.

The wolfish men all shrank aloof,  
 And feared this singer might be proof  
     Against their murderous power,  
     After his lyric hour.

But he, in liberty of song,  
 Fearless of death or other wrong,  
     With full spondaic toll  
     Poured forth his mighty soul:

Poured forth the strain his dream had taught,  
A nome with lofty passion fraught  
Such as makes battles won  
On fields of Marathon.

The last long vowels trembled then  
As awe within those wolfish men:  
They said, with mutual stare,  
Some god was present there.

But lo! Arion leaped on high,  
Ready, his descant done, to die;  
Not asking, "Is it well?"  
Like a pierced eagle fell.

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“OH MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR IN-  
VISIBLE”

---

*Longum illud tempus, quum non ero, magis me movet, quam hoc exiguum.* — CICERO, ad Att., xii. 18.

**O**H may I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence: live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end with self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like  
stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:  
To make undying music in the world,  
Breathing as beauteous order that controls  
With growing sway the growing life of man.  
So we inherit that sweet purity  
For which we struggled, failed, and agonized  
With widening retrospect that bred despair.  
Rebellious flesh that would not be subdued,  
A vicious parent shaming still its child  
Poor anxious penitence, is quick dissolved;  
Its discords, quenched by meeting harmonies,  
Die in the large and charitable air.  
And all our rarer, better, truer self,  
That sobbed religiously in yearning song,  
That watched to ease the burden of the world,  
Laboriously tracing what must be,  
And what may yet be better — saw within

A worthier image for the sanctuary,  
And shaped it forth before the multitude  
Divinely human, raising worship so  
To higher reverence more mixed with love —  
That better self shall live till human Time  
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky  
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb  
Unread forever.

    This is life to come,  
Which martyred men have made more glorious  
For us who strive to follow. May I reach  
That purest heaven, be to other souls  
The cup of strength in some great agony,  
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty —  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense.  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

1867

THE END







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